BELONGING FOR EMERGING GENERATIONS

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BY

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In honor of all who seek a place to belong.

We want true belonging, but it takes tremendous
courage to knowingly walk into hard moments.

- Brenè Brown *Braving, The Wilderness*

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS vi

ABSTRACT vii

Chapter

1. THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING 1

2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK 28

3. LITERATURE REVIEW 53

4. PROJECT DESIGN 74

5. OUTCOMES 97

Appendix

A. SBL SCRIPTURE ABBREVIATIONS 128

B. SURVEY DATA 129

C. INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS 228

BIBLIOGRAPHY 342

VITA 348

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures

Figure 1. Potential barriers: metro church word cloud 79

Figure 2. Potential barriers: all responses word cloud 79

Figure 3. Important factors: metro church word cloud 80

Figure 4. Important factors: all respondent word cloud 80

Tables

Table 1. Matt 5:7 17

Table 2. Eras of Hermeneutics 45

Table 3. Movement of Language and Meaning 48

Table 4. Characteristics of Belonging by Era 51

Table 5. Potential Barriers and Important Factors Compared 78

Table 6. Increases and Decreases a Sense of Belonging 86

Table 7. Barriers to Belonging 88

Table 8. Increasing a Sense of Belonging 121

ABSTRACT

We all need to find belonging. Many desire to find a place of spiritual community and safety. However, the Anglo-Western church is full of people who struggle to create a connection with their communities, and the impact is overwhelming. Researchers have reported a sharp decline in church attendance, with the number of United States youth identifying as atheists, doubling in recent years. It falls upon the church to understand why. So, what stops someone from finding a place to belong in the church? This project was designed to identify the barrier(s) to belonging for those faithful among the emerging generations.

CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

Introduction

As she felt the familiar vibration, she wearily looked over at her phone to see a text message pop up on the screen. It was late, well technically early. She was finishing her night shift at the hospital. The hospital had just sent out a mass text message asking for volunteers with experience to move to the pandemic care floor. A few years earlier, she had finished a graduate degree to specialize and hoped never to see an emergency department or pandemic floor again. Knowing that the inevitable recall would happen, she let out a sigh of exhaustion, put her protective mask in a paper bag for inappropriate but necessary storage, and prepared for the short walk home.

Her walk home had begun to feel different. The streets were empty, minus the growing number of tents set up next to the shelter. Normally, she would be walking home when the early-morning garbage trucks were driving past to collect the trash. She had started to recognize a few of the drivers, but she had not seen them since the quarantine began. Most of her friends would not be awake for another couple of hours. She probably would not see home for a few more months. Some of her friends had lost their jobs, while others worked from home. The exciting promise of a fulfilling career had never felt so distant. “We aren’t ready for this,” she thought as she noticed the sun rising.

A Context of Anxiety, Loneliness, and Meaninglessness

Our health care worker is no stranger to the context of the emerging generations. She knows that she felt pressure from her family not too long ago to get married, have kids, and pay her student loans. She was not respected as much as the men or the doctors. She is lonely, has not

seen her friends in weeks, and feels anxious. She could not remember why she wanted to be a health care worker in the first place. Her tiring routines were causing her extreme stress. Now, seemingly overnight, these symptoms were amplified by a global pandemic.

She grew up in church and still believes in a God, but she has not been to church in ages. Going to church just did not seem helpful or relevant. The church lobbies were reminiscent of a coffee shop, complete with baristas and newspapers. She walked in without speaking to anyone and left in the same fashion, feeling temporarily better about life. Even the small groups felt more like dating groups than meaningful communities. The few church friends she had during college were now married with kids, and she had not heard from them except through an occasional text or Christmas card. She quit going to church before the pandemic and never again saw anyone from there. Christianity had become foreign to her. She looked at the church walls with disdain, realizing that they were not built for her. She would always believe in the love of God but never again be trapped inside those walls.

Our health care worker is a part of the emerging generations group. This group of people consists of three generations (more on that later in this chapter). However, this story is not new. Emerging generation people have been living in a context defined by anxiety, loneliness, and meaninglessness for over a decade. The problem is a question of belonging. Why has our health care worker's worldview on Christian belonging been impacted psychologically and sociologically? What are the ethical and moral implications of how church leadership has chosen to act? To answer this question, the barriers to belonging need to be identified. There are four problems here: theological, pastoral, moral/ethical, and technical.[1]

1. Theological, pastoral, technical, moral and ethical problem methodology developed by Dr. Kenneth J. Barnes for Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary Doctorate of Ministry, Workplace Theology and Ethical Leadership program, 2018.

A narrow or incomplete theology is the result of having a limited view of context. When a worldview is not in line with a person's context, then there will be a theology problem. Our health care workers no longer felt welcome in the church because of an incomplete theology. Her theological experience was one of irrelevant theology. The worldview gap between the culture of her church and the culture of her experience was too large. Her experience of theology was no longer relevant to her context as an emergent generation nurse in the West. A church will not likely dominate the entire culture of a civilization. However, a church community's theological experience is set by teachers, denominations, and culture over centuries.

A mainstay of Christian theology that has developed inside of western culture is often referred to as Evangelicalism. [2] David Bebbington describes Evangelicalism with four

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2. The Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms defines "**evangelical, evangelicalism, neo-evangelicalism**. A set of terms arising out of the Greek word *euangelion*, "good news," or "gospel." In its most general sense *evangelical* means being characterized by a concern for the essential core of the Christian message, which proclaims the possibility of salvation through the person and work of Jesus Christ. More specifically, *evangelicalism* has been used to refer to the transdenominational and international movement that emphasizes the need to experience personal conversion through belief in Christ and his work on the cross, and a commitment to the authority of Scripture as the infallible guide for Christian faith and practice. *Neo-evangelicalism* is the classification given particularly to a movement of North American Christians that arose initially in the 1940s. Neo-evangelicals were initially interested in proclaiming not only the personal but also the social dimensions of the gospel, such as the need to work for justice for those who are socially oppressed as well as to offer care and relief to those who suffer physically."

Further, the *Dictionary of Theological Terms,* by Alan Cairns defines evangelical as coming "From the word *euangelion*, "gospel," *evangelical* is a description of those who maintain:

1. The inspiration and authority of the Bible as the Word of God and the only rule of faith and practice.

2. Salvation as preeminently a matter of personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

3. The historic doctrines of the Christian faith, with particular emphasis on those which are essential to salvation.

4. Salvation by grace alone through faith alone in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ alone, not by human merit. Justification by faith in the merits of Christ's finished work has always been the distinguishing mark of evangelicalism. Thus, evangelicals direct men not to depend on any sacramental experience to bring them into a right relationship with God, but to receive Christ by personal, appropriating faith.

5. The priesthood of all believers, so that they have direct access to God, without the mediation of priests or saints, and also have the right to read and understand the Bible for themselves, without the interposition of the authority of the church.

As J. I. Packer makes clear in *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, historically *evangelicalism* and *fundamentalism* were different words that described the same theological position. A softer response toward* liberalism* caused many evangelicals to distance themselves from the Fundamentalists to form what has become known as New Evangelicalism.*"

characteristics: conversionism, activism, biblicism, and crucicentrism. [3] This means that Evangelical movements are concerned with conversion, or rather, the transformation of a person by being 'born again.'

These movements are also focused on activism, primarily missionary-based social activities. Activist, or missionary work, was historically characterized by the Great Commission found in the book of Matthew. The refrain found in Matt 28:18-20 says, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Along with other scriptures, the commission led to the Western church's missionary and proselytizing efforts.

Regarding biblicism, evangelical movements are characterized by obedience to the Bible as the ultimate source of authority. Lastly, Evangelical movements focus on the death of Jesus as the authoritative act that enables the redemption of people. These characteristics are further used and defined by the National Association of Evangelicals as the system for measuring the identifying elements of the movement. [4]

The word *evangelical* has a significant historical context. The word used in this text is best described by the reforming pious work coming out of "eighteenth-century Britain. It is a usage designating a set of convictions, practices, habits, and oppositions." [5] During this period, the word *evangelical* nearly became synonymous with Protestant. [6] The movement doesn't appear to have remained purely protestant nor denominational in nature.

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3. David Bebbington, *The Evangelical Quadrilateral: Volume 1 Characterizing the British Gospel Movement* (Baylor University Press, 2021), 3.

4. https://www.nae.org/what-is-an-evangelical/, accessed October 22, 2021.

5. Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 17.

6. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism*, 17.

This cultural understanding of evangelicalism manifested into society, with the First and Second Great Awakenings serving as the backdrop. It is generally accepted that the first great awakening was an evangelical revival that swept through England and the early American settlements during the 1730s and 1740s. The second great awakening is defined by protestant revivals and reformation in the United States in the 1900s. Today, the evangelical church is often observed as a trans-denominational practice that grew out of spiritual practices seen in the Pious, Presbyterian, and Puritan movements. [7]

Throughout the centuries, the practice of evangelicalism has been observed in many branches of Christianity. As David Rausch noted in 1987, modern evangelism had become predominant without Protestantism. Rausch highlighted evangelicalism as one of the "Protestant principles during the Reformation era." [8] Over time, Protestant churches in the west became self-declared "evangelicals." [9] The movement's leaders have included John Wesley, Bill Bright, Jonathan Edwards, Billy Graham, Dwight Moody, and Harold Ockenga.

Paul Williams quotes the cry of the Student Volunteer Movement and its laser focus "on the evangelization of the world in this generation." [10] *The Moody Handbook of Theology* defines evangelical as a "biblical term, derived from the Greek *euangelion,* meaning "the good news." Hence, an evangelical heralds the good news of Jesus Christ." [11] Therefore, we can define an

7. For more on the history of Evangelicalism read *The American Evangelical Story: A History of the Movement* written by Douglas A. Sweeney.

8. D. A. Rausch and C. H. Voss, "The Century of Evangelicalism." *Ashland Theological Journal* 19 (1987): 71.

9. D. A. Rausch and C. H. Voss, "The Century of Evangelicalism," 72.

10. Paul S. Williams, *Exiles on Mission: How Christians Can Thrive in a Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2020), 8.

11. Paul P. Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology: Revised and Expanded* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 647.

evangelical as any person or group of persons who intends to proclaim and teach their view of salvation through Jesus Christ to another person or group of persons.

Protestant evangelical movements are simply efforts to spread the Christian message; evangelicalism has taken on additional characteristics over the last fifty years. Since the 1940s, in the English-speaking world and its traditional colonies, revivals began to convert hundreds of millions to the faith. The actual number may never be known. Throughout this intense period of conversion, several questions arose. How can someone like Billy Graham convert and then teach hundreds of millions of new Christians? Ministries emerged to instruct and teach the masses, and churches and parachurch organizations began simplifying the faith to teach large groups of people. Evangelicalism began to emphasize converting and training as quickly and efficiently as possible. Evangelical theology was reduced to extrapolated verses on ministry (or gospel) work to reproduce these effects. While many came to know Jesus, it is unclear how many began a relationship with Jesus.

The Christian gospel is a way of engaging culture in the moment without disrupting a society. During this period, the gospel movement was culturally aware of the need for mass simplicity. A checklist for living a holy life was developed for the evangelical movement using a classic western self-help model, almost as if the church had written a book titled *10 Steps to Holy Living*. Some organizations produced simplified tools and analogies. In one case, Cru produced what they call "GodTools." Jan Steward published an article in November of 2019 describing how these tools, to include a chair illustration of the gospel, can make a difference in a person's

evangelical conversations. [12] Another organization, The Navigators, produced a wheel illustration of the gospel and often used it as a guide for a "God-glorifying life." [13]

Many lessons from the Reformation appear to have been forgotten. There is a sense that the evangelical tradition has traded Catholic indulgences that led to salvation for behavioral indulgences that lead to holiness. [14] The theological problem is that behavioral indulgences are based on evangelical behavioral scripture. Behavioral scriptures are specific passages that have been pulled out of context by evangelical systems to enforce behavior. It should be noted that Chrisitan systems do promote certain ethic sets and behavior. Many of these sets and behaviors benefit the individuals and communities that practice them. However, if scripture is used out of context to promote or enforce the desired behavior that is not theologically attuned to the redemption arc narrative, then scripture is being mishandled. Given the very nature of spirituality, the proper use of scripture can be difficult to discern.

In the first example of such behavioral evangelicalism, scriptures support the continued proselytization of other people or groups of people. Verses that are commonly used to support the teaching of this behavior include Isa 52: ("How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation"), Matt 28:18-20 ("Go therefore and make disciples of all nations"), Mark 16:15-18 ("Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation"), Luke 24:45-49 ("repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem"), John 20:21-23 ("As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending

12. This article can be found at https://www.cru.org/storylines/2019/november/can-godtools-make-a-difference.

13. This tool and further descriptions can be found at https://www.navigators.org/resource/the-wheel-illustration.

14. See *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, 3rd ed, 8-13 for a full description of Luther's 95 theses.

you," Acts 1:8 ("you will be my witness in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth"), Eph 3:7-9 ("Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power"), 2 Tim 2:2 ("and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others"), Rev 7:9 ("a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and people and languages, standing before the throne").[15]

This behavioral scripture set example represents the evangelical mission to bring about global salvation and the beginning of an eschatological era. This teaching creates a theology focused primarily on ministry work rather than work that is engaging culture. If Christianity is reduced to a few behavioral indulgences, it is at risk of misrepresenting the fullness of the faith. Evangelicalism has, at times, reduced Christianity to checklists supported by select scriptures. The theological problem related to belonging is evangelical, but it is methodic more than a substance. Evangelical work is a part of Jesus's teaching and life, but He used a method of relationships rather than a method of behavioral indulgences.

In his thirty-second thesis, Martin Luther wrote, "For the grace conveyed by these indulgences relates simply to the penalties of the sacramental "satisfactions" decreed merely by man." [16] In a modern context, this thesis might read as: For the grace conveyed through intangible social and tangible compliant behavior, the sacramental "satisfactions" required are given by the subculture of people and the church, not by the ascended Christ. Teaching graceful redemption, as Jesus did in the five discourses of Matthew,[17] is a cornerstone of the Christian

15. All referenced scripture will be taken from *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016) unless otherwise noted.

16. John Dillenberger, ed., *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings* (New York, NY: Anchor Books-Doubleday, 1962), 493.

17. See Matthew 5-7, 10, 13, 18, and 23-25.

movement. Teaching redemption doesn't appear to be the issue. Perhaps there is disconnected theology behind the message.

On any given Sunday, the underlying message of a western evangelical sermon is often similar and may be predictable. Pastors, missionaries, teachers, and disciple-makers cling to a list of behavioral verses that are cherished truths. They often assign a measure of holiness to a Christian's worth based on these truths. This is an example of behavior indulgence. While assigning worth based on behavioral indulgences may not be intentional, the omission of contextualized theology undermines the community and the overarching redemption narrative of Christianity.

When an individual's holiness is defined only by the work of ministry, a person's spiritual identity may become associated with failure or shame. Most Christians will not serve in a traditional ministry role. Rather, most members of the Christian tradition serve culturally relevant roles in the family, such as wealth creation, healing, and governing. If the church asks a culture worker to measure their spiritual success by ministry standards – they will not be able to succeed. There is a disconnect in standards between a person sharing the gospel and a person creating wealth. Much of the church measures its life by a standard outside of evangelical behavioral indulgences. However, some churches associate psychological and spiritual success with ministry standards. This incongruence is troubling and often feels defeating for someone who loves God but isn't called to traditional ministry.

If this is happening, are Christians leaving the church out of guilt? How can a church help an individual to contextualize behavioral scripture? How does the teacher or pastor engage the culture on behalf of the majority Christian population? The 'workplace theology' movement has

attempted to address these questions. The movement has made significant headway among the layperson, but it doesn't seem to have impacted mainstream evangelical leaders as much. [18]

Even with the progress made by the faith and work movement, members of the emerging generations continue to struggle with the correlation of the gospel to their social contexts. If that trend continues, emerging generation culture workers will likely avoid engagement in a religion in which their identities are associated with spiritual failure.

The child in elementary school who is always chosen last for the kickball team is unlikely to continue playing kickball. This individual now sees themselves as being on the "B team." The church has created "A team" and "B team" participants in the faith through irrelevant theology that results in behavioral indulgences. The phycological and theological problem exists simply because pastors and seminaries tend to beget more pastors and seminaries. Seminaries teach pastors to be holy by carrying out the proselytization of the gospel. In Romans, Paul proclaims Is 52:7, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" (c.f. Rom 10:15) It is not hard to imagine why a church attendee might start to idolize their pastor and subconsciously place themselves on the 'B team.'

Using core evangelical texts, such as Luke 24, the pastor might say, 'you are holy when you preach the repentance of sins.' Then the banker's response might be, 'so when I create a loan, I am not holy." Quoting from Rom 10, the pastor might say, "If you preach the good news, you are beautiful." Then the farmer might think, "When I plow the field, I am just dirty." From Eph 3, the pastor might add, "You have experienced God's power as a minister of the gospel." Then the mother and military member resentfully thinks, "I will not experience God's power." This theoretical exercise helps to contextualize culture. If the gospel's purpose is only to save

18. For more on work theology begin with Tim Keller's text, *Every Good Endeavor,* or visit the Institute for Faith, Work & Economics website at https://tifwe.org/.

people for the millennial reign or eternal life, then the gospel's wonder is diminished and irrelevant to daily life. [19]

The theological problem is two-sided. It involves, first, the ministry leader and, second, the member involved in the ministry. The first problem is associated with the leader's theology. How a pastor, a missionary, or a small group leader communicates the gospel message is critical. The second problem is associated with the member involved in the ministry. The member must be faithful to God and, in doing so, must bridge the gap between the message of the gospel and their life contexts. If the ministry leader cannot begin building this bridge, it is much more difficult for the recipient to receive and apply the message well.

The theological problem can be summarized into two questions: 1) how is the message delivered, and 2) how is the message received? The answers to these questions involve translation. Translation of Biblical truth refers to the movement of the message through time and culture. Theologians or pastors know it as hermeneutics. Hermeneutics and exegesis must be applied so that the church members are equipped to love God and to love their neighbors in their contexts. A Christian does not exist to grow attendance and the purse of the church. These are functions of a Christian life, but not complete ones. A full Christian life is full of redemptive meaning and purpose; it is a life of spiritual abundance (cf. John 10:10).

Pastoral Problem

What is a pastor? Are they a teacher, a leader, an administrator, or perhaps a caregiver? Is it possible to be all these things to all members of a church? There is a disparity in what Christians expect a pastor to be and what roles they fulfill. It seems as if pastors have become the administrator, the teacher, the executive, and the leader. Pastors have become leaders who drive

19. See John 3:16: for they will 1) not perish, know God, and live abundant and 2) have eternal life, being given eternal purpose, which impacts a believer's eschatology.

church populations towards cultural engagements. Faith has a profound psychological impact; pastoral leadership will impact the psychological well-being of the church member.

Has pastoral care become an act of culture-building rather than character building? The problem is not cultural engagement; it is the type of engagement. Is the pastor taking a position of an exilic cultural engagement or Jerusalem kingdom building? The tension between a weekday life, a Saturday life, and a Sunday life is real. For example, in the Old Testament, the Israelites frequently move from a state of temple worship to a state of exile. Their building of a place to worship occurred three times: Moses and the Jews built the first tabernacle as a nomadic people. (c.f. Exod 25-26), King Solomon built the first temple (c.f. 1 Kgs 5-9), and the second temple was built under the leadership of Jeshua and Zerubbabel with the support of King Cyrus (c.f. 2 Chr 6:22-23 and Ezek 1-6).

Meanwhile, the Israelites were no stranger to exile. After Jacob left Canaan to find food in Egypt, Moses and the Jewish people wandered about the wilderness for 40-years (c.f. Josh 5:6). After Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the first temple, the Jews were slowly exiled to Babylon (c.f. 1 Chr 9:1, 2 Chr 36:20-23, Dan 1:1-7). Later, Jerusalem would fall to Alexander the Great, during which time the Jews lived under Roman influence and exile.

These events are etched into the memories of children during Sunday school. However, the changing cultural contexts of these histories are often overlooked. In one scene, the Israelites are intensely focused on building an elaborate place of worship. In the next, they are focusing on survival in a foreign culture. Most people live Monday through Saturday as exiles. However, on Sunday, the pastor teaches them to dedicate their holiness and efforts to the Jerusalem building. Arguably, therefore, Western pastors artificially live in Jerusalem during a worship service and suddenly exile their citizens at the end of the service.

Jerusalem kingdom-building work, however, is not congruent with exilic cultural engagements. The ontology of this conflict is "the loss of connection between our faith and every aspect of our lives—the sense that we're not able to be the same person in the varied communities and spheres of which we're a part—is a fracturing of integrity." [20] Such fracturing of integrity is at the core of humanity, rooted in the loss of identity. Christians naturally feel this tension because "all humanity is in exile," having been exiled and torn from the creator in Eden. [21]

Building the temple was the work of God. However, Christians in the third millennia do not live in a temple-building culture. Indeed, the call of God in this era is not for Christians to build a temple but to live in exile. Christians are exiles in what David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock have called a "Digital Babylon."[22]

Modern 'Jerusalem kingdom building' might focus on parachurches, creating sub-cultures, seminary training, preaching, small groups, church planting, short-term missions, financial giving, and the traditional family. Whereas modern "exilic cultural engagements" might focus on the generation gap, gender issues, race issues, sexual ethics, sexual identity, non-ministry work, economics, finance, loneliness, anxiety, government, conflict, modern slavery, and poverty.

During a 2018 study, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary sent students to attend a Harvard Business School focus group hosted by the Future of Work Project. It was clear to every student and professor from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary that the church had driven themselves away from culture into a micro imitation culture. Rather than bringing redemption

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20. Williams, *Exiles on Mission*, 34.
21. Williams, *Exiles on Mission*, 36.
22. David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock, *Faith for Exiles: 5 Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2019), 13.

into the world, it appeared as if the church has created a subculture that imitated reality. The Harvard Business School team was ecstatic to have representatives from the intellectual faith community in attendance. They wanted to understand how the church could engage and impact the future of work in the western world.

Why weren't Christians represented in this conversation before this unexpected and surprising exchange? Nobody from the faith community spoke on their future work because the church had chosen to exist in a subculture where a "Christian style of living" was more relevant. The Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary delegates were caught by surprise because they assumed that the Harvard Business School team would not want to hear the church's perspective. In their vision of Jerusalem Kingdom Building, Christian living must exist outside culture, which causes extreme tension for an emerging generation of Christians.

Meanwhile, pastors must recognize a generational distinction. Arguably, American millennials have more in common with Chinese millennials than with their own grandparents. This commonality is due to technology and a shift in worldview. "Americans' beliefs are becoming more post-Christian and, concurrently, religious identity is changing."[23] Western emerging generations will hold the most post-Christian worldviews of any modern western generation before them. "The percentage of Gen Z that identifies as atheist is *double* that of U.S. adults." [24]

David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock of Barna define Gen Z as comprising those born between 1999 and 2015, Millennials as those born between 1984 and 1998, and Gen X as those born between 1965 and 1984, and elders as those born before 1946.[25] McCrindle defines Gen

23. Barna Group, *Gen Z: The Culture, Beliefs and Motivations Shaping the Next Generation* (Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute), 25.
24. Barna Group, *Gen Z*, 25.
25. Kinnaman and Matlock, *Faith for Exiles*, 222.

Alpha as those under 10, Gen Z as those aged 10 to 24, Gen Y as those aged 24-39, and Gen X as those 40-54, Baby Boomers as those between 55 and 73, and Builders as those 74 or older. [26] The emerging generations—Millennials and Gen Z—are well into the age of work and leadership. Pastors cannot lead, teach, or care for emerging generations in exile in the same way that they led a temple-building generation.

Moral and Ethical Problem

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's story has captivated many since his death in 1945 at the hands of the German SS.[27] Bonhoeffer knew, better than most, the deep need for a full and practical theology. During this period, New Testament theology was treated "as a 'purely religious' power that encompasses the individual man in his outlook but is, at the same time, indifferent to worldly institutions and conditions."[28] For Bonhoeffer, by contrast, our ethics depends on the question of who Christ is. [29]

What ministry workers say and how they say it affects the psychology of a Christian. Jesus's discourse in Matt 5:7 can serve as an ethics example for ministerial communication. Matt 5:7 reads, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." A teacher could choose to teach this verse alone, or perhaps they would choose to teach a larger portion of the scripture and the virtues within it. Regardless of the choice, it has an impact.

This verse is a part of the first discourse of five major discourses in the book of Matthew. (Matt 5-7; 10; 13; 18-20; 24-25) When looking at the synoptic gospels together, there is a similar sermon given in Luke 6:20-49. Both sermons have similarities and differences. R.T. France

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26. McCrindle, 2019, "Gen Z and Gen Alpha Infographic Update" (blog) https://mccrindle.com.au/insights/blogarchive/gen-z-and-gen-alpha-infographic-update/.

27. To read the story of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, start with *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* by Eric Metaxas.

28. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, trans. Neville Horton Smith, 1st Touchstone ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1995), 317.

29. Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 381.

suggests that approximately 30 percent of the Sermon on Mount can be found in Luke 6:20-49, and approximately 27 percent of this discourse can be found elsewhere in Luke. [30] [31] The approximated 57 percent overlap between the Sermon on the Mount and the book of Luke could suggest that the passages were written as a summary of a sermon. It may also suggest an interpretive transcription that was tailored to a certain audience and context.

The difficulty in understanding the textual relationship is cultural context. For example, if orators maintained a repeated message, then these writings may be representative of the same talking points given in different circumstances. Without fully understanding the culture, it is difficult to draw conclusive findings. However, there is enough of a relationship between the passages that a teacher should consider the larger synoptic message and patterns in the teaching.

In addition to the synoptic cultural context, a teacher may want to consider the original language and its structure. While reading the passage in modern English, it may not be obvious that the stanzas give grammatical direction. This means that there is meaning behind how the text is written. That meaning is not implicitly stated. If the passage is only read in English, some of the meaning may be lost. In this situation, the implied meaning comes from the stanza's grammatical structure. For example, Matt 5:3-6 describes *how the church relates to God* [32], while Matt 5:7-10 describes *how the church relates to one another*. [33] While that is not explicitly stated, it is needed if the teaching is to be applied fully.

When Matthew chapter five is read in this matter, there is also a correlation to the pattern of Jesus's teaching found in Matt 22:34-39, "And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your

30. This sermon from Luke 6:20-49 is often referred to as the Sermon on the Plain.

31. Richard T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 154-155.

32. Wong Loi Sing, Julius R. 2016. "Theology of Practice of Soul Care and Discipleship." Lecture, Moody Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL, October 10-14, 2016.

33. Wong Loi Sing. 2016. "Theology of Practice of Soul Care and Discipleship."

God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." While this rhetoric is not a part of the five Matthean discourses, there is a system of ethics found in Matthew's record. The system first points to how the church relates to and loves God. The system then points to how the church relates to, loves others, and views itself. This system can have practical spiritual implications.

Having reviewed the basic exegetical framework for Matt 5:7, there are at least three possible options for how and what a pastor might teach from the pulpit regarding the verse. The first option emphasizes the virtue of mercy. Second, the pastor might teach the larger context of the discourse (sermon) and list other virtues outlined in this discourse. Lastly, the pastor might teach how to be merciful and how to accept God's mercy.

The first option appears to be common, but it lacks practicality. It is based on cause and effect, assuming a traditional view of guilt. The pastor is selling merciful behavior as an indulgence to receive God's mercy. The second option is most common because of the complexity of the original text and modern context. This option may omit the practical applications of each virtue. The last approach is contextually complex and challenging to navigate from the pulpit. However, it teaches how to engage merciful behavior through grace in a modern context.

Table 1

Matt 5:7

Option(s)	Method Summary	Contrast	Ethic Foundation
1	Show Mercy and Receive Mercy	Guilt Centered	Jerusalem Centric
2	Historical Context for Virtues	Not Practical	Historic Study
3	How to Engage Mercy Contextually	Contextually Complex	Exilic Centric

These options may all serve different purposes. However, the choice may have a spiritual and psychological impact on the church members. The first option, rooted in obtaining righteousness, is Jerusalem-centric. The second option is primarily focused on the study of historic ethical foundations. The third option is exilic. Option three—in which the pastor teaches how to engage mercy contextually would likely have the most positive impact on a church and the community. This option is also the most complicated because of the word "how."

Those who have gone through seminary may answer the question of mercy in line with option one. The daily rhythm of religious life requires a pastor to forgive and show no judgment during confession, lest God cast judgment on the pastor's teachings. What does this have to do with being a nurse? Should a nurse begin to receive confession and show mercy through deeply personal relationships? Is this mercy limited to confession?

How the pastor decides to teach this verse results in various worldviews. In the case of confession and indulgences, it created discord within the global church. It is easy for a pastor to teach how to conduct and the value of ministry work. The pastor is living ministry work and is taught those values in seminary.

During a preliminary research test for this project, six prompts were presented to an emerging generation household regarding Matthew 5:7: (a) "What is the definition of mercy?," (b) "What are examples of mercy in Matthew?," (c) "How have others shown you mercy?," (d) "How can you show mercy at home, work and social events?," and (e) "Write a prayer about mercy been shown mercy by other people," and (f) "How can you show other people mercy?" The small group struggled to answer questions about showing mercy in context and how to pray regarding mercy. How often is scripture taught from a Jerusalem or historical context rather than an exilic context? It seems that there may be a disconnect with emerging-generation Christians.

Is it the ethical responsibility of the ministry worker to engage modern contexts? Perhaps, the responsibility is to recruit or evangelize more individuals into ministry to redeem post-modern culture. Or is it the pastoral responsibility to care for the poor and the marginalized as a social justice advocate? Maybe, a minister is someone who teaches at a seminary and develops deep theological truths?

Within the Christian subculture, different individuals have taken on these various mantles. All of which seem to play an essential role in Christian theology. This structure is in danger of creating a producer and consumer culture in which a consumer of Christianity looks to and worships the pastoral experience. It is not necessarily relevant to the exilic life of the consumer. However, it does provide temporary phycological relief from the confusion of an exilic life.

The question of Christ and mission is not a new ethical question. However, every generation has answered this moral question in different historical contexts. Now, the question must be answered in a religiously fragmented, post-Christian, digital, and lonely modern society. It may be time for careful consideration of the Christian leader's moral responsibilities.

The modern evangelical movements seem to have strong ties to Constantinian and Lutheran-based faith cultures. During the rule of Constantine, Christianity gained social acceptance. [34] It was during this era that tax benefits, positions of power, and social normalcy were awarded to leaders of the church. Later in history, during the Lutheran era, Christians began an effort to challenge Roman Catholic teachings to include the indulgence salvation system. [35] In an indulgence system, people would go to the priest for absolution of their sins. This would often bring about psychological relief for guilt and shame.

34. Constantine the Great ruled as Roman Emperor from 306 to 337.
35. Martin Luther is often credited with ushering in the Protestant Reformation around 1517 in Germany.

The church in America often benefits from tax benefits while serving as political authorities and purveys social normalcy. Further, the evangelical movement appears to use behavioral indulgences rather than salvation indulgences. However, this church context probably consumes less space in a person's life today. During a lecture at the University of Melbourne, Tim Costello observed that young people don't experience the same type of guilt and shame that the church is trying to engage. Further, they do not seem to care much for the authority and normalcy of the institutionalized church.

Leading from a Constantine or Lutheran context doesn't always connect with culture. There is still a need for some of this work inside of the subculture. We might call it a Jerusalem context. Fear, anxiety, and loneliness do not appear to be uniquely modern problems. However, that context appears to be more prevalent than the guilt-based culture. This is to say that young people seem to need ministry in the areas of fear, anxiety, and loneliness. They may need less support in the moral teachings that can result in guilt or shame. Remembering our example nurse, she is exhausted and working tirelessly in the fight against a deadly pandemic. She is anxious about her job, fearful because she does not have personal protection equipment, and often returns to an empty apartment where she is isolated. This nurse is less concerned with her guilt than she is with her context.

The time of prosperity, rest, and joy seems to be absent. The global pandemic (COVID-19) has ushered in an era that invites a church of ethics, virtue, and love. It is yet to be discovered what will remain in our lives and what will fade away after the pandemic. In general, however, crisis creates space for leaders who are ready to recontextualize the gospel into a new context. In past crises, the church has built hospitals, paid medical providers, and addressed human needs. The church has fed the homeless and children with nowhere else to go. The church

has served those with physical, emotional, and mental needs. There is a need for that same church, and it remains to be seen how the institution will love in this new era.

In the absence of a religious ethic that serves the exilic context, the government can serve a religious type of role. This has been observed throughout the recent pandemic. The church remained relatively silent on the issue of caring for the sick. The absent church seems to be watching from the sideline. Instead of displaying divine love, many churches appeared to participate in fundamental political behavior. When the church's silence becomes overwhelming, the voice of another will probably rise and fill the void.

Technical Problem

Lastly, the technical problem can be best described by mathematical sets. [36] In 1978, Dr. Paul Hiebert of Fuller Seminary used the mathematical theory of sets to create a Christian dialog on categories. [37] He drew a comparison between Christianity as a bounded set versus Christianity as a centered set. Christianity is a bounded set where there are people inside and outside a system of parameters. Either you fit into the set of parameters or you do not. This happened in school to most young people, when a social structure began to develop around groups, and young students started to belong to certain sets but not to others. While simplified, the school culture is

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36. Dr. Paul Hiebert references the following articles on mathematics and set theory. This article can be found online at: https://danutm.files.wordpress.com/2010/06/hiebert-paul-g-conversion-culture-and-cognitive-categories.pdf.

a. Cohen, P.J., & Hersh, R. "Non-Cantorian Set Theory," *Scientific American* 217, no. 15 (1967): 104-106.
b. Cohen, P.J. “Set Theory and the Continuum Hypothesis.” (1966.)
c. Hashisaki, J., & Stoli, R.R. 1975. "Set Theory," *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th ed. Macropedia 16: 569-575.
d. Hatcher, W.S. *Foundations of Mathematics*. (1968).
e. Zadeh, L.A. "Fuzzy Sets," *Information and Control* 8 (1965): 338-353.

37. Paul G. Hiebert, “Conversion, Culture and Cognitive Categories: How much must Papaya ‘know’ about the Gospel to be converted?” *Gospel in Context* 1, no. 4 (October 1978): 24-29, http://hiebertglobalcenter.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/153.-1978.-Conversion-Culture-and-Cognitive-Categories.pdf

technically similar. This system of categorical (bounded) sets is the foundation for identity. For example, an apple is not an orange. Further, a cat is not a dog. These are examples of bounded sets that are static.

Meanwhile, a centered set is more dynamic. In a centered set, all objects are moving towards or away from the clearly defined central focus. Today's dynamic and connected culture creates several examples of centered sets. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, governments, and people from all over the world have clearly defined a unified need for action. In a unique occurrence, most of the world's population is moving either towards or away from the center, defined simply by "flattening the curve." A more complex example, artificial intelligence algorithms in social platforms and media, identifies users based on certain centered parameters and moves users either towards or away from that content.

According to brandwatch.com, as of February 28th, 2020, Barack Obama had the most followers of any Twitter account, coming in at 113,300,000 followers. [38] This is not only a result of Barack Obama being the president of the United States but also due to algorithms identifying users who are likely to follow Barrack Obama and moving them towards the content on Twitter that might result in a "follow." During the 18th and 19th centuries, centered may have looked like the city center church building or perhaps a school. Today, centers are more dynamic, fluid, and intangible. They change at a rate, often beyond the human capacity to comprehend.

Dr. Hiebert's work attempted to reduce the complexity of Christian social behavior into bounded and centered sets nearly fifty years ago. Yet, leaders of the church still struggle to understand identity and its effect on social behavior. Contrary to western culture, there are

38. Brandwatch, 2020.

always more than two sides to any matter. The same is true regarding sets. The option beyond the bounded set and the centered set starts to engage the evident tension.

The world is dynamic. Cultural changes as knowledge grows, technology changes, problems arise, and society evolves. Meanwhile, western churches continue to align themselves in a static set, outside of a cultural context. The church defines righteousness by standards that establish an in, out, and bounded set.

These sets also impact belonging and identity. A bounded set clearly defines rules and criteria for belonging. Using the same fruit example, look at an apple. An apple might have various characteristics, including the shape, flavor, peel, color, edible content, and it is grown on a tree. If an item has these characteristics, it would be called an apple, and it would belong to the set of characteristics. If an item does not have these characteristics, it would not be called an apple, and it would not belong to the set of characteristics. So, it is known that if an item belongs to the apple category, then it does not belong to a potato category. Bounded sets easily define belonging.

Next, centered sets also impact identity and belonging. However, centered sets are more difficult for western thinkers to conceptualize because it is not a common concept. Nonetheless, start by looking at an apple as a consumable product. Apples are grown so that they can either be consumed by other creatures or harvested to capture the seeds. If this approach is taken, then what purpose does the apple serve? The apple's purpose to the consumer is simply consumption, meaning it is meant to be used as a resource. Considering this scenario, what other objects are used for consumption or as a resource? For example, many items fit into the category of edible plants, including lemons, oranges, bananas, lettuce, celery, and cucumbers. In the bounded set, an apple and a potato are in different categories, but they are in the same category in a centered

set. The centered set is not based on the apple's characteristics but rather on the apple's purpose. There are now a lot of bounded set categories that fit into a centered set. While this resource purpose may be included in the bounded set criteria, additional criteria are added to create a narrower category.

To the western thinker, conceptualize a centered set in the context of meaning, or rather a centered purpose. Western culture is littered with thinking about meaning. Victor Frankl developed his logotherapy in the concentration camps during World War II, and his findings are outlined in the book *Man's Search for Meaning*. [39] Dr. Lindsay McMillan of Australia developed a system for creating purpose in the modern workplace. [40] Simon Sinek explores "How Great Leaders Inspire Action" in his Ted Talk, where he describes the golden circle, which has meaning and purpose at its center. [41] Lastly, Ken Costa, an internationally renowned banker, investigates modern Christian work and meaning in his book *Know Your Why*.

The next question becomes, is it easier to belong in a centered set or a bounded set? At first glance, it seems simple since there are fewer criteria for a centered set. However, the ontology of orthodoxy seems to fight against fewer criteria. If all people could agree on a simple and elegant central focus, it might be more natural to find belonging. In school as a teenager, that is often not the case. Nor is it always the case in a Christian context due, in part, to a cultural rejection of certain elements of orthodoxy.

Modern and sometimes disparate orthodoxy may never allow for a centered set due to variances in theological positions. To complicate the technical problem further, each

39. Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015), 97-134.

40. Lindsay McMillan, *Delivering Purpose and Meaning* (London: Reventure Ltd., 2017), http://www.afuturethatworks.org.au/reports/.

41. This talk can be accessed at https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action?language=en

denomination of orthodoxy creates a different standard of bounded sets that define righteousness. Even though many Eastern churches are more in line with a centered set, Western orthodoxy's traditional ontology may prevent most Christian traditions from being defined by a centered set. Dr. Hiebert concludes his article by saying, "Ultimately, the question of whether we should see the term "Christian" as a bounded or as a centered set must be decided on theological, not pragmatic, principles." [42] At this juncture in history, the global church does not agree on this technical problem.

Barriers to belonging in a Christian context are deeply rooted in Dr. Hiebert's question. Unfortunately, current orthodoxy may refuse to answer Dr. Hiebert's question. The barriers seem to exist somewhere between a bounded and a centered set in what I will call the "universal set." A universal set is defined as "a set fixed within the framework of a theory and consisting of all objects considered in this theory." [43] This problem says that there are barriers to belonging in a universal set that includes both A and B group psychology. In other words, all systems, centered and bounded, along with Jerusalem and exilic, have barriers to belonging. The first and most obvious being belief or acquiescence to the basic truth claims of the Christian religion.

If that is true, then what is the greater narrative? Similarly, a young adult in school may be a part of the "in crowd" or the "out crowd," many Christians have experienced A team or B team sensations. If self-identifying Christians overcame the initial barrier to belonging in the universal set, what barriers remain?

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42. Hiebert, "Conversion, Culture and Cognitive Categories," 24-29.

43. Eric W. Weisstein, *CRC Concise Encyclopedia of Mathematics* (New York: Chapman & Hall/CRC, 2003), 3122. Additionally, see Abraham A. Fraenkel et al., *Foundations of Set Theory* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2001).

Research Question

Having derived a specific technical problem, the remainder of this thesis will seek to answer the question: What are the barriers to belonging for emerging generations (e.g., those under the age of 38) in a large western and metropolitan Christian community?

Thesis

Belonging is a cornerstone of faith communities. Therefore, building bridges and overcoming barriers to belonging provides opportunities for meaningful conversations with emerging generation people groups on the future of the church.

Hypothesis

Organizations such as Barna and McCrindle have made it evident that emerging generations are increasingly post-Christian. There appear to be barriers to belonging in the greater Christian community for those who do identify as Christian, likely because Christian culture is not congruent and ignorant of context.

However, even self-proclaimed "progressive," "forward-thinking," or "next-generation" western churches are experiencing barriers to belonging. Some evidence suggests that individuals are leaving the church but not necessarily the faith. These barriers to belonging have to do with behavior and identity.

The thesis hypothesis is based on behavior and language rather than modeling. First, barriers to belonging are often created by ancient hermeneutic gospel language. These barriers can be peacefully applied to a modern western context with a culturally relevant hermeneutic. Second, barriers to belonging may also be created by behavioral standards set forth by the church. These standards may be more cultural than spiritual in nature. The redemptive narrative should be considered on ethical and moral matters in the church.

Project Design

The thesis project will be based on the population and its needs in relation to belonging. The study will focus on individuals under the age of 38. This people group includes Millennials, Generation Z, and Generation A. Hereafter, this group will be referred to as "emerging generations." Emerging generations will be surveyed, interviewed and the resulting information will be tested for use amongst the community's leaders.

Desired Outcome

The desired outcome of this thesis will be threefold: (1) goal, (2) strategy, and (3) tactics. First, the goal is to identify barriers to belonging amongst faith-based people in the emerging generation people group. Second, the strategy will be to focus on identity, culture, behaviors, and values. By looking at these factors, a comparison will be made between individual values and institutional church values. Lastly, discussion topics will be introduced to allow liturgical leaders an opportunity to evaluate their institutional methods in the context of emerging generations.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

He sat in the pew, half-listening to the priest. As was the tradition in his family, he still went to Sunday mass every week. His mother always dragged them to the neighborhood parish when they were young. They would walk nearly thirty minutes one way to receive the Eucharist. Now, as an adult, it did not seem to mean the same thing. There was very little evidence of love in his work, his home, or in his city. Ever since his family fled his war-torn country, he was torn about his faith.

It seemed as if no one around him noticed his painful memories or related to his struggle as an alien immigrant. Jobs were difficult to find. Thankfully, a farmer took him on as a farmhand about a year after he arrived in his new home country. Even years later, language was still an ongoing challenge. He knew he believed but was having difficulty reconciling the church's teachings and practice with his experience in life. He barely understood the language, much less the theology that was being taught.

Suddenly, shook from his thoughts, the priest ended mass. He was surprised to realize that he had not heard much of anything that morning. He wondered if his wife and young children were benefiting from religion. Perhaps it would be better to focus on his family and work. As he went to genuflect, he decided that he would always believe in God but may never return to a church.

Understanding belonging requires a clear image of the scriptural narrative. This hypothesis will be evaluated within the theological framework of the living word, for “all scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for treating, for reproof, for correction and for

training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (cf. 2 Tim 3:16) First, it is hypothesized that barriers to belonging are created by behaviors that do not consider the Holy Spirit's work through the greater redemptive narrative arc. Additionally, barriers to belonging are created by ancient hermeneutic gospel language that can be reconciled by a new hermeneutic of the gospel to the modern western context. Moving through the redemption story, then into redemptive hermeneutics, barriers to belonging begin to fade in the light of God's love for creation.

Final Redemption

A Christian's eschatology strongly impacts how that individual chooses to live. How a person believes their life will end shapes their daily decisions. For this reason, it is important to think about redemption by first imagining the end.

Some conservative evangelicals have strongly proselytized the immediate need for salvation. The end is either eternal damnation or eternal salvation. Often, Christian pastors and theologians will tout the rhetoric of fall and redemption, emphasizing the need for a person to somehow garner belief to save themselves from damnation and fear, ultimately leading to a belief system rooted in behavioral salvation and escapism. For those who are to be dammed, fate is foretold. The faithless and evil, "their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." (cf. Rev 21:8). To the unrighteous, "these will go away into eternal punishment." (cf. Matt 25:46).

But those who believe will "not perish but have eternal life." (cf. John 3:16). To the extent that the church's mission is to usher in an era of Kingdom ruling that includes people from every place on earth, "I looked and beheld a great multitude that no one could number, from

every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb." (cf. Rev 7:9)

This view of eschatology often resulting in the church focusing on one mission. That is to save as many souls as possible from eternal damnation. The narrow focus of one mission raises two concerns. First, salvation is a tenant of the faith. However, saving souls does not appear to be the only purpose found in the greater narrative of scripture. The narrative of the creation includes sin and salvation, but it also includes flourishing.

In Genesis, the *cultural mandate* was given to "be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it... to build and cultivate" [1] (cf. Gen 1:28, 2:5). This mandate expands the view of mission. In another example, Jesus's answer to the *greatest commandment* appeal was to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (cf. Matt 22:36-40, Mark 12:28-31). This mandate expands the mission of the church even further. These two examples may appear to be less prominent when a church focuses primarily on the salvation mission,

Secondly, a potential pitfall of focusing primarily on salvation could be the dehumanization of God's created beings. Jesus simplified the law and gave the second *greatest command* as to "love your neighbor as yourself." (cf. Matt 22:36-40) In doing so, Jesus gave us hope that there is likely a more profound theology of final redemption. It is as if Jesus is giving humanity more to do in life than to save one another from damnation.

J.R.R. Tolkien teases out this complex issue in his short story "Leaf by Niggle." Niggle is an artist who struggles with his artwork but finds his work completed alongside a mysterious

1. Hugh Whelchel, *All Things New: Rediscovering the Four-Chapter Gospel* (McLean, VA: Institute for Faith, Work & Economics, 2016), 5.

power in the echoes of eternity. [2] While his artwork in the "old country" was destroyed, Niggle found meaning in the journey. Does the question become whether it was the result of Niggle's work that mattered? It was destroyed. So then, what brought Niggle purpose; the artwork that was completed, the ongoing eternal growth, or the way Niggle lived with others?

An eschatology of salvation and damnation alone places the human on God's throne and dehumanizes the creation's role in the redemption story. It is only Christs' eternal love that saves. Jesus's salvific work of incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension saves people. (cf. Rom 1-5) When the church focuses solely on salvation work, they are often prone to forget that it is Jesus who did the work. It is easy to forget that the salvation work is complete. When we take upon the heavy mantle of salvation, we are placing ourselves on Jesus's throne. Further, if we treat people as subjects to be saved, it is easy to forget their beautifully human purpose in life.

The natural tension for a western scripture reader is to see a beginning and an end. Often with themselves at the center of the story. The story of time should rather be read in the context of God's supremacy (cf. Rom 11:36, 1 Cor 11:1). It may be that the end is not a linear fixed point but instead the beginning of endless cyclical existence that N.T. Wright describes as

> the time when God will fill the earth with his glory, transform the old heavens and earth into the new, and raise his children from the dead to populate and rule over the redeemed world he has made. [3]

A more inclusive theology maintains a fall and redemption narrative. Expanding and including the rest of the story, a complete theology might look like creation, fall, redemptive mission, and final redemption. Hugh Welchel describes the "four-chapter gospel" as creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. [4]

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2. J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Tolkien Reader* (New York, NY: Del Ray Books, 1966), 100-120.

3. N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2008), 265.

4. Review *All Things New* by Welchel for an in-dept analysis of this version of the redemptive arc.

Redemption is a well-established concept in the Christian faith. Redemption in the faith community is often taken as a person is either 1) cured of sin and thus made to live a wholesome life, or 2) returned to a state of origin, in which they are reunited with God in an Eden-like state of purity before the fall. The first take on redemption captivates the Christian into behavioral compliance; the second renders the Christian purposeless. As was famously preached from the so-called "Romans Road,"

> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. (c.f. Rom 3:23-25)

Does this redemption mean that a Christian is purified from sin and made to live life by a particular set of rules? Further, does this redemption mean that a Christian is returned to a state of Eden-like life in perfect union with the Trinity? Neither of these options sits well within the context of Romans or the context of a post-modern Christian.

Paul was the primary user of ἀπολύτρωσις (apolytrōsis) in the Biblical text regarding redemption. (c.f. Rom 3:24, 8:23, 1 Cor 1:30, Eph 1:7, 14; 4:30 and Col 1:14). ἀπολύτρωσις also appears in Luke 21:27, which is thought to be a teaching of Jesus: "Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near." ἀπολύτρωσις and other cognates; λυτρόομαι, λύτρωσις and ἀπολύτρωσις appear to be used in the context of freedom. Specifically, ἀπολύτρωσις (apolytrōsis) is used in the context of what one is freed from. Likewise, the term redemption used as a verb in a modern context is to liberate or to set free.

It is important to understand the ancient language but very difficult for any modern person to understand a language that is not culturally felt. With that said, what, then, does redemption mean to today's Christian? Is a Christian redeemed, (set free from sin) only to abide

by the social restraints of a sub-Christian culture? Or is a Christian redeemed (set free from sin) to live as if they are in the garden of Eden? Perhaps neither. When Jesus preached that our redemption was drawing near, he prophesied liberation and freedom in a future setting. Redemption gives humankind insight into what will be. Not that God will return to Eden but instead that God is renewing and continuing creation.

Redemptive Movement

Abolition movements of oppression, slavery, racism, nihilism, suffrage, and nationalism have captivated the human heart for many millennia. Thousands of lives have been sacrificed to ensure freedom and liberty during the more recent World Wars, Cold War, and Civil War. Less deadly but equally relevant, Women's Suffrage and Racial Equality. These movements have not always been led by the faithful, but they have been redemptive. In some cases, these efforts have resulted in more freedom or liberty.

Even amongst the chaos, there seems to be a good and ongoing fight for freedom, liberty, and redemption. Christ will continue to do the good work of redemption in us and creation. (cf. Phil 1:6). What, then, is left to the church? Many Christians end the story here. All that is left to the Christian is to behave well and share the wonderful news of redemption. However, these pursuits are not the only pursuits of the body. Jesus liberated the church from sin to do much more than become prisoners to acceptable social behavior. Jesus came so that the flock might "be saved and will go in and out and find pasture...that they may have life and have it abundantly." (cf. John 10:9-10). With the word made flesh came peace: "Peace I leave you; my peace I give you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (cf. John 14:27).

Further, in Matt 11:28-30, Jesus proclaimed:

> Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you find rest in your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

These small fragments of the gospels echo a story of salvation and liberation, rest, peace, comfort, fullness, abundance, and purpose. There is a fullness of the gospel that includes but goes beyond traditional missionary work.

Life often seems chaotic and uncertain. The twenty-first-century evidence includes COVID-19, the financial crisis of 2008, and the attack on New York on Sept. 11, 2001. Further, loneliness and anxiety are at an all-time high. How does a life of fullness, abundance, and purpose exist after liberation? Often it seems as if all of humanity exists in a never-ending spiral of uncertainty. The same could be said of New Testament times. Yet, in a chaotic and demonic situation, Jesus proclaims, "All things are possible for one who believes." (cf. Mark 9:23). There is hope in Jesus' parables and actions. When Jesus exhibits hope, there is also an exhibition of Jesus' peace, or shalom.

The redemptive arc of this story began with creation moves through to a time when Jesus finishes the work of the Church. It is a redemptive arc of actions throughout history that is slowly moving humanity towards peace. Such peace is not just harmonious but also brings welfare and health. When Jesus left peace (εἰρήνη) with creation, it came with a fullness that goes beyond a western idea of harmony (εἰρήνη) and is related to the Hebrew phrase שָׁלוֹם or shalom.

Paul did not hide the fact that some concepts were difficult to understand. He made an astonishing admission about shalom: "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding" (cf. Phil 4:7). Paul, an expert in practical theology, admitted that shalom was something beyond his comprehension. It seems that Paul knew that Jesus gave creation his shalom but struggled to understand it practically.

It is likely due to the redemptive arc quickly moving past the horizon into the future. While some visionaries and prophets have seen into the future, there are very few clues into the destination. Two questions must be asked about redemptive thinking when this arc is considered:

- How is the church moving (geographically and theologically)?
- How are individual identities in the church changing?

The answer to these questions starts with shalom. The mystery of peace and peacemaking is the purpose for which many have been called into liberty and freedom. Shalom "signifies a number of things, including salvation, wholeness, integrity, soundness, community, connectedness (to others and to God's creation), righteousness, justice and wellbeing (physical, psychological and spiritual)." [5] Further, Cornelius Plantinga defines Shalom as "…the webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight [6]

Church Movement

First, how is the church moving geographically and theologically? The church has made significant moves in the twenty-first century. Today, a modern Christian is statistically more likely to be an ethnically brown or Chinese female than to be an ethnically white American male. The church's geographic center is moving east and south, away from the center of the last millennium. Further, the rise of independent and charismatic churches may overwhelm the institutionalized churches in the next few decades. The independent church is "easily the fastest-growing segment of global Christianity and must become a central part of our larger conceptual framework." [7] As the 1.1 billion Roman Catholics, 386 million, and 252 million Orthodox

5. Hugh Whelchel, *Shalom Booklet: The Shalom of the City* (McLean, VA: Institute for Faith, Work & Economics, 2020), 3.

6. Whelchel, *Shalom Booklet*, 5.

7. Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2010), 40.

traditions slowly grow or decrease in population, the 423 million independents Christian church shows signs of explosive growth. [8]

It has been estimated that nearly "4,300 people per day were leaving the church in Europe and North America" at the turn of the millennia. [9] While some estimates have come in much higher, it is even more difficult to know how many people are leaving church organizations but not the faith. It appears that exilic Christians and emerging generations are leaving the church but not necessarily the Christian faith. This independent "fourth branch" of Christianity is difficult to define but appears to be growing in Asia, Africa, dynamic and digital cultures. [10]

A third-order effect of human geographic movements will inevitably be a change in church theology and mission. Stronger African and Asian influences will continue to change how mission and practice are viewed solely based on culture. As more leaders arise from marginalized church populations, theology will change, which is not necessarily bad. Too often, growth is seen as a toxic change because of fear. When the hope of Christ is claimed, as Paul claimed it, there is reason to be violently optimistic. It is being seen even in the global west. Now theologians are calling for a refinement of missiology to encompass the redemption of time, space, and matter, ushering in "hope for God's renewal of all things." [11] To accomplish this redemption, Jesus promised the Holy Spirit and explosive change to the church.

> Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. (cf. Jn 14:12)

8. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 40.
9. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 34.
10. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 41.
11. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 269.

That is a colossal promise that reaches far beyond the bounds of ordinary and simple human minds. Preaching to more people than Jesus preached does not appear to fit that description. Jesus preached the good news of the sacrificial atonement but also healed the sick, fed the poor, walked on water, turned water into wine, cast out demons, raised people from the dead, and fasted for forty days. Preaching, evangelizing, and teaching are critical. Jesus did these things and commanded the Church to do the same. However, education is incomplete without further purpose. If the gospel is only meant to create more missional workers, then only missional workers will find value in the gospel. The gospel was helpful to a second millennial Christian because western people felt guilt strongly. Now the gospel is being used to engage the human experience, where engaging means making "the gospel relevant as good news to [people's] whole lives." [12]

Among others, Stan Guthrie names this "holistic," or increasing scope of the church's mission as a potential minefield of the third millennium. [13] While there is room for prudence, God asks that fear be recognized and given back to Christ. The church mission and theology must quickly adapt to a post-Christian (or post-Christendom) world. However, Christians should not assume this means "to be secular." [14] This is not the first time, nor the last, time that a Church must exist as an exilic entity.

The leaders of many Christian communities are prone to "deny God's truth and adhere to lies." [15] The church is often quick to deny a redemption of shalom and quick to adhere to theology that propagates the existence of an organization. The church does not solely exist to

12. Michael W. Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today: Scripture, History, and Issues* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 382-383.

13. Stan Guthrie and Jon Bonk, *Missions in the Third Millennium: 21 Key Trends for the 21st Century* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press, 2014), 242-234.

14. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 32.

15. Welchel, *All Things*, 9.

propagate itself. Rather, Jesus finished the mission set forth, declaring upon His death that "it is finished" (cf. John 19:28-30). But then Christ defeated death and ascended (cf. John 20:1-10 and Acts 1:6-11). In place of Christ and the temple, the Spirit came at Pentecost. The Spirit now enables the Church to grow, prosper and do great works. (cf. Acts 2:1-12).

This sense of expanded mission moves the Churches along the redemptive arc of history further into the future. There is hope in the work of the Holy Spirit and the development of knowledge. The Christendom model of Christianity to collect and isolate seems self-defeating. Such barriers may not allow for unity and love. Jesus desired unity and committed it to prayer. (cf. John 17:20-23) A church focused on the future of a redemptive mission is

> the church that takes sacred space seriously not as a retreat from the world but as a bridgehead into it will go straight from worshipping in the sanctuary to debating in the council chamber—discussing matters of town planning, of harmonizing and humanizing beauty in architecture, in green spaces, in road traffic schemes, and (not least in the rural areas, which are every bit as needy) in environmental work, creative and healthy farming methods, and proper use of resources. [16]

The church and its members in the body are traveling along the arc of redemption. From the creation (cf. Gen 1-2) to the ascension (cf. Acts 1:9) to all things being made new (cf. Rev 21:5), the "resurrection of Jesus has brought about a new state of affairs in cosmic history and reality." [17] The resurrection, the ascension, and the coming of Spirit continue to move the church along the arc of redemption. It may be time for the church to refine its mission in the western world as the Spirit of God leads and works.

Identity Movement

Next, how are individual identities in the church changing? The cultural and national identities of Christians will be different in the current millennium from the last. As Asian and

16. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 265-266.
17. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 272.

African churches expand exponentially, there will be much work required to understand Christianity among global cultures.

Alongside the geographic membership changes, there is also a generational change. The interconnectivity of a global economy and thus the global church cannot be ignored. With unlimited access to information and continuing growth of knowledge, the individual identity of Christians is changing. For the sake of this dialog, the focus will be on western identity.

An established western Christian is fiercely and culturally independent, traditional, and confident. It seems that culture and the Christian are at odds in the west. In true western fashion, a false "us versus them" dichotomy has been established. "True Christians" accuse society of secularism and defiance. Meanwhile, society accuses Christians of hypocrisy and bigotry. While there is likely truth to both sides of this dichotomy, the emerging generations are not impressed. What is the church to do about the overwhelming confusion around identity? Who are the members of the church, and who will they be?

It is evident in scripture that all of humankind was created in God's image (cf. Gen 1:27). There is little debate on the divine characteristics of humanity. Certain mortal attributes of God's nature are found in humanity. Christ said that those who are categorized as Christians are:

- The Light of the World (cf. Matt 5:14);
- Children of God (cf. John 1:12);
- Born Again and Will See the Kingdom (cf. John 3:3);
- Given Eternal Life Through Belief (cf. John 3:16);
- Chosen and Chosen to Bear Fruit (cf. John 15:16), and
- No Longer Servants but a Friend (cf. John 15:15).

There should be congruence between these characteristics and the individuals of the post-Christendom church. In response to the well-documented hypocrisy in the church, there seems to be a palpable desire for authentic lives in the Church. This desire is pure and reflective of the pure heart listed in Christ's beatitudes. (cf. Matt 5:8).

The Christendom antithesis to authentic living is often the argument that being authentic is not the goal of Christianity because a 'Christian's identity is found in Christ.' Something about this theology is puzzling to the emerging generation. There is a sense that this group finds authenticity in congruence with the teachings of Jesus. If the Divine created a person as they are, then there must be a way for them to follow a Christian ethic.

Eph 5:1-2 reads, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved Children. And walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Here, God is asking us to follow a virtuous model set forth by Jesus. Jesus modeled humility and love to the point of death but did not equate humans with Godlike status. The virtues of Jesus's teachings include love, humility, and purpose. Following these virtues doesn't appear to conflict with authenticity. Rather Jesus's virtues are often strengthened through authenticity. So then, finding our identity in Christ likely means that we are to imitate the ethic taught and modeled by Jesus. This calling brings a person into a humble and salvific relationship with the Divine.

The issue of identity, individual and community, will be one of the most important contexts of this era. It is challenging to connect Christ's view of Christians with the modern experience. The destination of the redemptive arc is humankind at final redemption. The process of movement is not a simple one when it comes to identity. Christ describes what we now discuss as the existential, the exoteric, and the essential person. While existentialism recognizes the person's identity through their experience, exotericism recognizes the personal identity through their practices or doctrines. Essentialism identifies personal identity through natural characteristics. A person's essentialism (nature) is often said to come before their existentialism (experience and purpose) and exotericism (behaviors). Many Christians attempt to define identity by one of these categories. Nature, purpose, nor behavior alone can define an identity.

Saying that someone's identity is in Christ could also be talking about their existentialism, exotericism, or essentialism. As all humans were created in the image of God, their essentialism (nature) has something to do with the image of Christ (cf. Gen 1:27). Additionally, the fact that Christians are chosen to bear fruit says something about their existential experience and purpose (cf. John 15:16). Lastly, that Christians are to be the light of the world through the behavioral beatitudes describes exotericism (behaviors; cf. Matt 5:14). This concept is not simple, yet it is often taught in that way.

Someone from a minority culture may be told to deny their culture and claim Christ as their identity. This would likely occur when the majority culture believes their way of life is in concert with their Christian faith. In this example, the minority culture is being asked to deny their cultural existentialism. In another example, a person who works long hours at the bank could be asked to give more time to the church and to share the gospel at work. This is an example where a person is asked to ignore the exoteric nature that makes them a successful banker.

Lastly, a person with sexual attraction to a member of the same gender is often told that their attraction is sinful. In this example, the individual is asked to forget their essentialism. The difficulty with this process is that people have nature. They were created with it. They have experience; they seek purpose and are active in behavior. The church should not simplify the identity of Christ without seeking an understanding of redeemed essentialism, existentialism, and exotericism. God does not seek to divide nor hide from complex matters. Christ desires to redeem the identity of individuals and communities. Redemption does not abolish nor return. Redemption brings good from all things. "Out of [God's] great love for his people, God

fashioned men and women as partners in his grand story to carry out his work alongside him in a relationship with him." [18]

A New Hermeneutics

The objections to a new hermeneutic from scripture might sound like this:

OBJECTION: Christ paid the price of redemption from sin, so now the church must subject itself to the laws of the coming Kingdom (cf. John 1:22, Matt 7:24).

OBJECTION: Christ said to deny oneself and take up the cross daily, finding one's identity in Christ alone (cf. Luke 9:23, Gal 2:20).

OBJECTION: Christ did not bring peace but a sword (cf. Matt 10:34).

Is the redemptive church and identity movement, therefore, in violation of the scriptures? It may seem as if there is now a contradiction in the word. How is that possible? Hermeneutics must be evaluated to answer these questions. If the church is moving along the redemptive arch, perhaps it is time to re-evaluate its scriptural hermeneutic.

The tradition of hermeneutics is critical and should not be dismissed. However, limiting meaning to grammar leaves scripture "disconnected from what has gone before and has little or no anticipation for what is to come." [19] The ever-living word of God, full of grace and truth, has historical meaning, present meaning, and future meaning (cf. John 1:14). As the church moves further into redemption, it must evaluate the significance of scripture to the current and future contexts while honoring the invaluable meaning found in tradition. Traditional hermeneutics is overwhelmingly evident. Jesus applied the law to the context of the day. Paul was a hermeneutic expert and practical theologian. Other expressions of the Spirit, applying the scripture to context,

18. Whelchel, *All Things New*, 4.

19. Walter C. Kaiser and Silva Moisés, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 67.

include St. Augustine, St. Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Graham, and Keller. Each of these individuals expertly applied the living and moving word of God in their context. In a sense, they redeemed the practice of hermeneutics.

Without question, the tradition of knowledge must persist. However, post-modern Christians cannot solely rely on historical meaning to understand the love of God. No one alive today can imagine the depths of language, emotion, culture, geography, and politics of the early church. Nor that of the medieval or renaissance church. Every generation must evaluate behavior, gospel, and mission hermeneutically to their culture. At many points throughout history, this has required significant realignment of church doctrine and thus spiritual disciplines.

The west has gone through an incredibly intense period of change that demands a significant effort for the church to redeem its hermeneutic. Since 2000, the west has experienced two economic recessions, the 9-11 terrorist attack, persistent wars, and a global pandemic. Technological advances have allowed every person to have a computer in their pocket, on their wrist, in their cars, and on every device. Artificial intelligence and data analytics have increased efficiency far faster than humans have been able to "re-create" themselves in a new economy. Psychology, medicine, and science have made significant inroads into understanding quality of life, environmental data, and what it means to be human.

As previously mentioned, this is also the first time in modern history that Christianity is no longer a western religion and may shift with an evolving global economy. That means a shift in the evangelical world as well. These events should not be a reason to fear, for Christians must live in hope. The reality is that the western world has experienced extreme cultural shifts during the twenty-first century. This situation creates an excellent reason to hope, but it also raises significant reasons for the church to require a new hermeneutic.

While necessary, this is not a comfortable concept. Moving from orthodoxy may feel like heterodoxy at times. The assumption that hermeneutics will always result in a theology that is in line with a static orthodoxy is not congruent with a dynamic and living text. (cf. John 1:14) Movement and change are uncomfortable. A scripture that applies to a dynamic culture may appear to be too inconvenient. Inconvenient though it may be, it is the responsibility of the teachers to engage in the tension.

The task is to find meaning in the scriptures so that the word brings life to contexts that have not been redeemed. Not all contexts and situations can be imagined; thus, a method of discernment must be used to find meaning. Ignatius of Loyola, among others, encouraged spiritual disciplines of discernment through the spirit:

> No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this, we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. (cf. 1 John 4:11)

Contextual Theology

Two types of hermeneutic work are culturally prevalent in current evangelical Christian circles: an ancient hermeneutic and a modern hermeneutic. The scripture was applied to a Constantinian culture and a Christendom culture. These two views of scripture are the prevailing views taught from the pulpit. Neither view will be sufficient to meet the redemptive needs of a post-modern Christian.

The theology taught from a Constantinian worldview is done within the context of Greek and Roman culture. The purpose is historically critical, "as it is becoming increasingly clear that the traditional (and biblical) understanding of the OT as the revelation of God to Israel." [20] In the

20. Eugene H. Merrill, Mark F. Rooker, and Michael A. Grisanti, *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2011), 147.

same way, a military student would study lessons from the World Wars. During sermons, the context is often oversimplified due to the lack of knowledge of the cultural context.

Theology, taught from a Christendom worldview, focuses on a guilty or indulgent culture. These teachings come across as intellectual and esoteric, but they do not recognize the pragmatic. The context of Christendom was spiritually reasonable, full of tradition and Christian culture. Teachings from this perspective are directed towards a guilty but spiritually enlightened society.

Table 2

Eras of Hermeneutics

Era	**Constantinian**	**Christendom**	**Post-Modern**
	Greek and Roman	Guilt Culture	Alternate Story
Hermeneutic Purpose	Historically Critical	Esoteric Intellect	Practical Theology
Societal Context	Oversimplified	Spiritually Enlighten	Contextually Complex

Teachings taught inside and to a post-modern context must recognize the alternate story. Society is continuously looking for an alternative to anxiety and loneliness. The word is now anxious and lonely. It is no longer guilty. Humanity is in search of meaning, which requires hermeneutical teaching that results in practical theology. Jesus and the living word must be practical:

> The impact of redemption in our daily lives is not just theoretical; it is practical. In the midst of great hardship and pain, we experience joy, laughter, love, peace, reconciliation, and beauty. We see redemption in relationships repaired, illnesses healed, cities rebuilt. Successful businesses provide goods and services to consumers around the world, promoting flourishing and prosperity. Innovation and technology have changed the global economy, communication, healthcare, finance, and more. Communities come together in the face of tragedy to rebuild, support, and care for one another. By living lives demonstrative of Christ's love, we extend God's redemptive grace to others.[21]

Meanwhile, this must fit into a complicated individual existence. The Christian movement does not capitulate to post-modernity but, instead, engages cultural complexity through the mission. This engagement requires a challenging mix of ethics, scripture, and spirit work. The post-modern society struggles to believe an overarching story based on general experiences. Christian metanarratives are not as meaningful because the exile micronarrative begins to take hold. Individualism cares about how a commercial product creates joy or pain. Individualism feels the love or hate in a social media post. Individualism craves meaningful connection in the face of an acutely tragic context.

Individualism demands that belief intersects in micronarrative rather than metanarrative language. The meaning of language takes on different meanings, based on different experiences and individual microcultures rather than a general truth. With prayer and the leading of the Spirit, the search for meaning in language can begin. Math is the language of science. In the same way, human language gives meaning to feelings, experiences, and objects. News bite culture, posts, and opinions can be quickly taken out of context. It is difficult to know what is true. It is also impossible to tell from which context the tweet or news post was taken.

The same could be true for how the west treats scripture. When someone comes to a pastor with anxiety, the standard answer is, "do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God. And the

21. Whelchel, *All Things New*, 12.

peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (cf. Phil 4:6). Alternately, when a member of the emerging generation comes to church "in search of something meaningful," they are given the mission to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (cf. Matt 28:19).

Phil 4:6 and Matt 28:19 are both cornerstone verses that often create a feeling of safety and pride for Christendom communities. However, to an emerging generation individual, neither of these verses is that meaningful. It is never that simple but requires more context and spiritual discernment. The person came to the church for help with anxiety, meaning, and a type of loneliness. The superficial, temporary psychological relief that comes with reciting scripture plays a role but is insufficient. For these theologies to take root in the heart, a person must understand the greater redemptive narrative of scripture and apply it to context.

There is a clear variance in the language used to describe the redemption arc and its result. Christendom language says that the redemptive arc begins with faith, from which comes redemption, thus peace and hope. However, a post-modern person might say the redemptive arc starts with trust, from which comes liberty which results in human flourishing and belonging. Tim Costello of Australia states that "the real idea behind salvation is flourishing – let's do alter calls to flourish." [22]

22. Remarks given at a lecture series to the Gordon-Conwell Doctorate of Ministry WTEL Cohort at the University of Melbourne, February 2020.

Table 3

Movement of Language and Meaning

New Testament Greek	Christendom Language	Post-Modern Language
Πίστις	Faith	Trust
ἀπολύτρωσις	Redemption	Freedom and Liberty
Εἰρήνη (cf. שָׁלוֹם)	Peace	Human Flourishing
ἐλπίς	Hope	Belonging

Contextual theology must address the language and meaning of the day. The age of anxiety and loneliness stops people from faith and trust but also belonging. The church is failing to address the wars, racial injustice, the sexual revolution, the economic crises, COVID-19, work, and identity. So, what purpose does the gospel serve?

Belonging in Scripture

The post-modern question of belonging is excruciatingly unclear. It is audibly absent from scripture and theological study. In its place exist commentary on early Acts, church doctrine, traditional family structures, and fledgling groups of spiritual disciples. One of the initial references to the term belonging comes from "The Message" rendition of the Holy Scriptures.

"You're no longer stranger or outsiders. You belong here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. He is using us all-irrespective of how we got here-in what he is building." (cf. Eph 2:19-22) This expression of Ephesians is not the standard practice of any branch of Christianity. As thousands of emerging generation people vanish daily from the church, they do not feel the church creates this sense of belonging.

Using the historically critical lens, the first sense of belonging was one of place. "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it." (cf. Gen 2:15). Then came the concept of the nation as God promised, "and I will make of you a great

nation, and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing" (cf. Gen 12:1). From place and nation came the tribes of Israel from Jacob, constituting family and legacy:

> All these are the twelve tribes of Israel. This is what their father said to them as he blessed them, blessing each with the blessing suitable to him. Then he commanded them and said to them, "I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field at Machpelah, to the east of Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham brought with the field from Ephron the Hittite to possess as a burying place. (cf. Gen 49:28-30)

A person "belonged' to their group as constituted by tribe, nation," and place for the remainder of the Old Testament. Adding more social complexity, it was more honorable to be a part of an Israeli tribe: "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possessions, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth." (cf. Deut 14:1)

On occasion, there are examples of adoption, such as when Jacob adopted Ephraim and Manasseh and said that they "shall be mine, as Rueben and Simeon are" (cf. Gen 48:4). In these cases, a person would leave their old nation, place, and tribe to join another. They were then chosen. So, a person's identity was defined by tribe, nation, place, and being chosen. In this case, a person's name would tell the story of their identity:

> Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron, the father of Ram.... (cf. Matt 1:2-3)

By post-modern standards, this genealogy is not exactly thrilling. A person still honors their nationality, their local city, and (sometimes) their biological family. That person might even be chosen to serve in an honorable societal role. Yet, it is rare to hear such an introduction outside of a modern monarchy.

The next stop on the redemptive arc is the New Testament. The person of Jesus was a remarkable answer to the promises of the Old Testament. Nevertheless, Jesus diverged from the community described in the Old Testament. Suddenly, a King of royal blood and divinity chose not to propagate the traditional tribe, nation, place, and chosen paradigm. Jesus began to build a community of disciples by calling Simon Peter: “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men” (cf. Luke 5:1-11). This cohort was extraordinarily diverse and non-traditional. Jesus began to establish firm boundaries for involvement in the community of discipleship: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple” (cf. Luke 14:26). “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me” (cf. Luke 18:21).

Jesus’s adopted community seems to be made up of random men and women of extreme sacrifice. If a wandered asked a fisherman to abandon all to follow a set of behaviors, it would be unquestionably considered a cult today. That is not a comfortable fact. Nonetheless, Jesus created a type of community that brought meaning, purpose, and belonging to a group of people that forever changed history. It lacks the comfort of *tribe, nation, place, and being chosen.* Jesus uniquely identified vocation by calling people out of one role into another without the tradition of the family.

Moving onto another stop on the redemptive arc, Paul continued expanding the idea of tribe, nation, place, chosen, and vocation. At the Jerusalem Council, Paul and Barnabas argued for the Gentiles' inclusion and conversion without circumcision (cf. Acts 15). This council only required “that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what

has been strangled, and from sexual immorality" (cf. Acts 15:26). An ever-increasing definition of belonging now included tribe, nation, place, being chosen, vocation, equality, and behavior.

Based on this review through scripture, belonging has complex characteristics. As reviewed later in this text, belonging can come to a person through many means. This review is focused on finding some of the ways belonging comes into being throughout scripture. The sacred texts reveal a few characteristics of belonging. For example, during the creation narratives belonging is characterized by nation and place, to name just two. These characteristics exist in other phases of history.

However, this is one of the first times in scripture that people associate belonging through a characteristic of nation and place. During the era of Israel, belonging was strongly characterized by tribe and being chosen. During the era of Jesus, belonging was additionally characterized belonging by vocation and family. Lastly, during the era of Paul, belonging was characterized by behavior and equality.

Table 4

Characteristics of Belonging by Era

Creation	Nation and Place
Israel	Tribe and being Chosen
Jesus	Vocation and Family
Paul	Behavior and Equality

Conclusion

"It is time to figure out what it will mean, in the real world of the twenty-first century, to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." [23] The church should try to recognize and address the tension of 'both' for the emerging generations. The emerging generations mark a clear step

23. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 269.

forward along the redemptive arc of history. They seek a hermeneutic that gives voice to what it means to be both wise and innocent.

The post-modern and western church doesn't appear to apply theology well to the context of culture. The leaders and staff are often cared for through the hard work of their congregants. Often this is done with little respect for the congregant's context and place. The context of culture and the redemption narrative is important. Without this context, the church would be without money and care. Leaders in the church should seek to relate to culture and understand the gospel in context.

The church is moving on a journey along the redemptive arc. The practice of theology is understood better when the church sees God's movement considering a new and modern hermeneutic of scripture. While the topic of belonging is not the only reason for this new hermeneutic, it is important to the topic of belonging. Belonging has been characterized in many ways throughout history. The expansive characteristics of belonging throughout scripture include *tribe, nation, place, being chosen, vocation, equality, and behavior.* However, to understand belonging in the church today, further practical study is required.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

She was looking at photos on her phone. Remember that time when I received an international business award on stage in Italy, she thought? Life had changed so much; she barely recognized her years of effort. The federal government was floating the economy. Most of her staff had been furloughed or laid off. Her partnerships were falling apart, and most of the tourism that once kept her business thriving was gone. The fleeting hope of an end to the crisis was gone.

She and her husband had always wanted to have a child, but life had not given them the opportunity yet. Perhaps now was the time, she thought. Then again, they had wanted to get more involved in their church community. The problem was that they did not have a place for a powerful, confident businesswoman. They wanted her money, but they did not want anything of her personality, thoughts, or skills. So, she continued to pour her time into community and business efforts. The world certainly needs help, and she was willing to step into the battle. Maybe she would find time to pursue her desire to have a child or be more welcomed in the church, but she continued to fight until then.

As we will discover in this chapter, we all need to belong, and we all need to belong to live. We will continually search for our place; we will settle into a way of belonging, or we will be forced to cope with our loneliness and anxiety. There is an inherent spiritual desire to connect with others and with a divine nature. The Psalmist writes in the 133d chapter, “how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!” There is great joy found in a unified community.

Our ability to belong is as diverse as is humanity. The topic of belonging has been written about since the tribes of Israel were written about in the Pentateuch. Modern literature explores the various ways a person finds belonging. We begin with literature about belonging as a complex interaction between identity, values, and behaviors. Often, belonging varies on a scale and is dependent on many different systems. Belonging can be seen in commitment, morality, and the wilderness. Youth often struggle to negotiate belonging because of its dependency on a place. Traditionally, Christians have found belonging through Christian community, membership, and grace.

Furthermore, belonging is a critical component in the development of emerging generations. However, in this chapter, we will explore Dietrich Bonhoeffer's observations that the church has primarily focused on belonging through membership and spiritual discipline. [1] The remainder of this chapter will review other research and literature that will establish a foundational understanding of this complex social and theological theme of belonging.

Belonging through Commitment

Commitment is not a popular word today. Fear of missing out (FOMO) is one of the comical slang terms that has presented itself in the age of social comparison. The fear of not getting the best of the best, the fear of failure, the fear of not getting to experience life have resulted in a considerable reduction in commitments. David Brooks argues that commitment has a role in helping us find our place and identity.

We generally make very few significant commitments. The commitments that do have a long-term impact on our ability to find belonging are larger ones and are made "over the course

1. For more on Dietrich Bonhoeffer's observations see the section titled: *Belonging through Christian Community.*

of our lives: to a vocation, to a spouse and family, to a philosophy or faith, and to a community." [2] These things can change, but when they do, it causes a large shift in our life. It changes who we are at a character level. We change at the moral and mental level of who we are as a person. Our character level is defined by our mind and our ethic. For this reason, they do not come quickly and take extreme motivation to move into. It is common today for people to avoid the final commitment phase of this process because of fear.

Fear is not the primary barrier to belonging in this case, but it is a symptom. The profound nature of a commitment is that it is driven by motivation. Someone may desire to belong to a family, philosophy, job, or community, but a simple desire will not be enough. We might want to be the businesswoman described in the introduction. However, the long nights, weekends, constant change, financial uncertainty, and loneliness required to complete such a task require a strong motivator.

Brookes argues that the strongest motivator is love. It is not necessarily romantic or erotic love but an emotional response so strong that it is clear why we might do something. Why are we committed to a behavior, a value, a person, or others? Love is one of the few motivators that is stronger than fear. 1 John 4:18 states that "there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfect in love." Love is required to make a lasting commitment to a family, philosophy, job, or community. Because "a commitment is a promise made from love. A commitment is making a promise to something without expecting a return—out of sheer lovingness." [3]

2. David Brooks, *The Second Mountain: The Quest for a Moral Life* (New York, NY: Random House, 2019), 53.

3. Brooks, *The Second Mountain*, 55.

A promise of commitment often comes at a cost. However, love brings many paths into congruence via commitment. Usually, "love will change everything in unexpected and inconvenient ways." [4] We could suddenly find ourselves committing to a community or a faith system that is not convenient to the life we are living. In many ways, the expected could be beautiful, especially as we find ourselves with incredible commitments.

So, why do so many people find it difficult to make loving commitments? Returning to the idea of fear, we fear many aspects of commitment. Instead of loving commitments, we often chose individualism. The rights of an individual are crucial! However, where pious individualism reigns, commitment and communication cannot exist.

> Hyper-individualism leads to tribalism. People eventually rebel against the isolation and meaninglessness of hyper-individualism by joining a partisan tribe. This seems like relations but is actually the opposite. If the relationism is meaninglessness based on mutual affection, the tribalist mentality is based on mutual distrust. It is always us versus them, friend or enemy, destroy or be destroyed. [5]

Commitment to a tribe is often an illusion. It provides comfort through sameness, but it destroys any hope of diverse and meaningful relationships. Sameness describes people that are like one another in looks, behavior, emotion, patterns, emotion, and spirituality. As "tribalism is the dark twin of community," hyper-individualism is the dark twin of belonging. [6] We think that tribalism will provide us with connections, but it is a false community. We think that individualism will provide us with a sense of purpose, but it is a false sense of belonging.

Tribalism is the commitment to the same idea without recognizing the humanity of those within the tribe. Cults or extremist groups exhibit strong tribal behavior. Individualism is a natural step in the movement towards a very unhealthy tribe. Therefore, genuine commitment is

4. Brooks, *The Second Mountain,* 54.
5. Brooks, *The Second Mountain*, 299.
6. Brooks, *The Second Mountain*, 300.

essential. David Brooks' work emphasizes that commitments give us identity, a sense of purpose, and more freedom, and it establishes our moral character.

> There is another way to find belonging. There is another way to find meaning and purpose. There is another vision of a healthy society. It is through relationism. It is by going deep into ourselves and finding there our illimitable ability to care, and then spreading outward in commitment to others. [7]

Belonging through Morality

Whereas David Brooks attributes tribalism to hyper-individualism, social phycologist Jonathan Haidt ties tribalism to moral system foundations. Moral systems may very well be the foundation that binds tribes and communities alike because "our minds were designed for groupish righteousness." [8] Haidt argued that "We are selfish, and we are groupish." [9] We naturally focus on self-interest but are also driven to be with others. When we cannot incorporate a sense of diverse relationship, our communities must be made up of people who do not violate our self-interest. This phenomenon explains political division well, but how does it play into Christian religious divisions? Haidt's research discovered six moral foundations that split conservatives and liberals. It is not so much that one group has morals while the other does not; instead, some morals are emphasized at different levels by different groups.

The assertion is that "morality binds and blinds." [10] Morality can bring people together and then remove the ability to see another point of view. Faith-based communities are also moral system-based communities. When religious culture places its focus on morality and behavior, it becomes divided. In Chapter One, I noted that evangelical theology, present in all branches of Christianity, has come to include a behavioral checklist.

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7. Brooks, *The Second Mountain*, 297.
8. Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (London, UK: Penguin Books, 2013), 370.
9. Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, 369.
10. Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, 369.

These behavioral checklists can either point a person to the divine or ensure moral compliance within the faith system. While evangelicalism was originally an answer to fundamentalism, we again face a divided church. When a religious institution is weaponized, the faith-based moral system divides. Jesus rebuked the weaponized Jerusalem culture of moral division: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" (cf. Matt 23:37).

Returning to Haidt and our businesswoman example, was she wrong to lay off her staff during challenging economic times? Is it greed or survival? Most of her like-minded friends would probably celebrate her practical decision to care for herself, her family, and the legacy of her business. Others may have said that she was responsible to her employees to keep them on, rather than giving into corporate greed. In either case, there is a moral judgment being made. Either the businesswoman is good or bad.

However, saying that someone is purely good or bad is Manichaean. Manicheanism was a dualist religion based on the prophet Mani that competed with early Christianity. [11] The religion rivaled Christianity as a moral system that had a significant influence on culture. Manicheanism was refuted by Augustine and the Catholic church, and it was preferred by many over Catholicism because it "offered a rationally defensible account of God's goodness in its ascribing of the origins of physical suffering." [12] Augustine wrote against the idea of a good soul and a bad soul because our souls are derived from the Divine. [13]

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11. For more on Manicheanism, see *Manichaeism: An Ancient Faith Rediscovered* by Nicholas Baker-Brian.

12. Nicholas Baker-Brian, *Manichaeism: An Ancient Faith Rediscovered* (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 137.

13. For more on St Augustine's anti-Manichean writings read *About Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 1.4: The Writings against the Manichaeans and against the Donatists* from the series *Early Church Fathers* (Protestant Edition).

In chapter one, I discussed centered and bounded sets. In a bounded set, someone is either in or out of the system based on the given standard. A moral judgment often places someone in or out of a system. That person is judged in a Manichean system. The person is either in or out of the established social standards. Naturally, a person will likely be driven towards like-minded people to protect themselves from the judgment of others.

This is a good explanation of why people spend time with people who don't judge them. The question then is: why does the church appear to be silent on Manichean ethics? Jesus appeared to be interested in both morality and groups. He even created a group of disciples and instructed them on teaching (cf. Matt 4:18-22, Luke 24:47). Matt 4:18-22 says:

> While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus formed a group by 'calling' two brothers together and giving them a mission to become fishers of men. After this mission-based group formed, Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount. This sermon is littered with discourses on morality and relationship. If we want to model community after Jesus, then both groups and morality are needed. Removing institutional structures does not eliminate division. However, when the institution serves only self-interest, it creates division. Our saving grace may be that "we all have the capacity to transcend self-interest and become simply a part of a whole." [14] Just as love and commitment create beauty, transcending self-interest gives us "life's most cherished experiences." [15]

> So, the next time you find yourself seated beside someone from another matrix...don't just jump right in. Don't bring up morality until you've found a few points of

14. Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, 370.
15. Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, 370.

commonality or in a bit of trust. And when you do bring up issues of morality, try to start with some praise, or with a sincere expression of interest. [16]

Belonging through Wilderness

Brenè Brown calls the state of loneliness in the world today "a spiritual crisis." [17] Like Brooks and Haidt, she recognizes an incredible shift in polarization and greater division. We sort into groups that allow us to hide behind ideas and preferences. The issue with this behavior is that "ideological bunkers protect us from everything except loneliness and disconnection." [3]

We need belonging to live, and when we hide behind our ideas and preferences, we cannot find belonging. Brenè adds a new element to belonging. In a near biblical sense, she compares finding belonging to a journey into the wilderness. As if God were sending us into the desert for 40 years to wander. We find that our ability to belong is located in a very uncomfortable place, and we do not like that.

Comfort is the god of the era. The story is fully stocked with gadgets that bring more comfort and ease into life. A person doesn't have to leave home to watch a movie (or film). Nor do they have to go to a grocery store or cook food for sustenance. Everything is comfortably available in an orderly fashion through a computer or phone. Society worships comfort and order. However, it is the enemy of spirituality and true relationship. Spirituality and relationship require continual growth. We must experience discomfort, or diversity, to grow. Bill Eckstrom states that "what makes you comfortable can ruin you, and only in a state of discomfort can you continually grow." [18]

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16. Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, 371.

17. Brené Brown, *Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone* (New York, NY: Random House, 2019), 43-60.

18. Bill Eckstrom, "Why Comfort Will Ruin Your Life," TEDx University of Nevada, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBvHI1awWaI.

Safety is needed but pursuing comfort at all costs does not ensure safety. Comfort and safety are not the same. Comfort allows people to avoid relationships and growth. Safety is about survival which allows people to sleep soundly. Belonging is often seen in the light of survival. [19] Physical security is a critical boundary here. Emotional safety is not about feeling good but about ensuring that we do not dehumanize: "We must never tolerate dehumanization–the primary instrument of violence that has been used in every genocide recorded through history." [20] Safety is crucial for belonging; comfort may serve as the greatest enemy of belonging.

We can exist in the wilderness safely and find our place to belong in the wilderness. Being in the wilderness is not about being alone. Instead, it is about committing to a practice of belonging to oneself and to no one. It is the practice of belonging everywhere and nowhere. Returning to Brooks' philosophy, we must go through a valley before we are able to fully make meaningful commitments.

In a wilderness methodology, we must step out and away from comfort to find belonging. Our ability to flourish and help others flourish depends on true belonging. "True belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance." [21] In many instances, the church will punish a person for presenting their imperfect selves, creating a wilderness in the modern context.

Belonging does not require that we forbid God, but it does require that we prohibit institutions in some instances. We are used to looking to others for affirmation, especially regarding matters of spiritual direction and liturgy. However, we should heed this healthy advice:

19. Eckstrom, "Why Comfort Will Ruin Your Life," 84.
20. Eckstrom, "Why Comfort Will Ruin Your Life," 75.
21. Eckstrom, "Why Comfort Will Ruin Your Life," 32.

> Stop walking through the world looking for confirmation that you don't belong. You will always find it because you've made that your mission. Stop scouring people's faces for evidence that you're not enough. You will always find it because you've made that your goal. True belonging and self-worth are not goods; we don't negotiate their value with the world. The truth about who we are lives in our hearts. Our call to courage is to protect our wild heart against constant evaluation, especially our own. No one belongs here more than you. [22]

Belonging through Christian Community

Many have been given the gift of true joy in the Christian community. This mercy is usually not granted over an entire life, but it does happen in season. "The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer." [23] This joy and strength are rooted in the joy and love of the spiritual relationship with Christ.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote on the practical nature of the Christian community and the benefits of this community. While much of the technical instructions may not be relevant to a modern context, the characteristics of a united, healthy Christian community are timeless. The bond of a united group in the Christian sense is the bond of faith. [24] In chapter one, we talked about bounded and centered sets. In contrast to the bounded set, where a united group is bound by in and out rules, his is a prime example of a centered set: a Christian group is centered around faith.

According to Bonhoeffer, unity is where the faithful "dwell together through Christ." [25] This is still a commitment, as Brooks suggested. It is a wilderness, as Brown wrote. However, in contrast to Haidt, there is a surrendering of moral systems to faith. True Christian "fellowship is founded solely upon Jesus Christ and this alien righteousness." [26]

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22. Eckstrom, "Why Comfort Will Ruin Your Life."
23. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 1954), 19.
24. Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 39.
25. Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 39.
26. Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 23.

The barriers to entry are not of human making. Alien righteousness requires us to elevate above selfishness because it is not something that we can create independently. It is alien; it is "other." It is not a bunker that can be built by our strength. When we try to do so, we are keeping people out of the Christian community. However, "the exclusion of the weak and insignificant, the seemly useless people, from a Christian community may actually mean the exclusion of Christ." [27] Such a community is not a Christian community because it lacks the alien righteousness of Jesus. We have evicted the lover of the lost, the lonely, the poor, the prisoner, and the one who is different. Our community will not be perfect in life, and we must expect it to be so. Not all Christians need to agree to live in peace together. We all come from different backgrounds and experience life differently: "Christians can live with one another in peace; they can love and serve one another; they can become one." [28]

Belonging through Place

Belonging has a lot to do with place. A theology of diversity also has to do with location. A diverse church is reflective of its place. But what is place? Place sometimes comes in the form of presence. Humans are carnal in presence; we are real, tangible beings. At times, people have physical needs like shelter, food, and water. People also need physical touch as "it is one of our most basic, primal needs." [29]

Place is also often referenced in the context of geographic boundaries. Regarding church placement, there might be one or two church denominations in the geographic area. In historic context, most of the population would attend either one of those churches simply based on the

27. Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 38.
28. Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 24.
29. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/everyone-top/202108/the-vital-importance-human-touch#:~:text=The%20need%20for%20human%20touch,%2C%20pets%2C%20and%20weighted%20blankets, accessed October 11, 2021.

ability to move. Now, people can move drastically, or they can virtually be in another place without movement.

So, place has now taken on a definition that is more than geography but still carnally present. The concept of place now implies sameness and tribalism. If you do not like what you experience, simply dial in another experience or travel to an experience that fits you better.

Place also includes social boundaries. This is especially true for the emerging generations negotiating identity "in multi-layered everyday realities." [30] Belonging and place are intertwined in a way that shows us how these complex social realities impact youth's identities. Further, the identities of emerging youth are affected by religious communities.

Organized "religion is not an all-or-nothing category confined to the physical and institutional boundaries in which its members practice it." [31] The juxtaposition between faith systems and society creates a complex sense of social identity in youth. We cannot create faithful Christians in a vacuum because no person exists inside a religious incubator for life. Rightly so, faith systems extend beyond the walls of a church or Christian community.

Youth within the current western church system must enter constant social negotiation. Negotiation is a necessary step to form belonging. Negation is the act of reconciling complex psychological, sociological, and religious factors. To truly understand this, Charles Dube had to extend religious society and youth identity "beyond a focus on Christianity as a set of ideas and practices that occur in the church." [32]

Dube understood that youth coming into a new environment would have to renegotiate their belonging and that their religious culture would play into that negotiation. These lessons

30. Sadia Habib and Michael R. M. Ward, *Identities, Youth and Belonging: International Perspectives* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 62.
31. Habib and Ward, *Identities, Youth and Belonging*, 62.
32. Habib and Ward, *Identities, Youth and Belonging* , 51.

come from a study on Pentecostal youth in South Africa, but the correlation and tension felt by other denominational youth are clear:

> On the one hand, participants were pushed to be generous and to embrace God through good deeds. On the other hand, the Pentecostal faith argues that the devil is also around to tempt believers to form the path of righteousness. Young church members who were not yet strong in Christ were at risk of falling into the wrong hands. [33]

Youth are finding ways to negotiate their belonging all over the world. Increasingly that place is not in the context of a church. The negotiation required to find a place to belong in the church is too complicated. Marchbank and Myrdahl noticed that "LGBTQ youth in Surrey, BC, in their need to belong, have created and maintained spaces both actual and strategic, both for their own usage and to communicate to the wider community their presence and contribution to civic life in" the city. [34] Youth will simplify their experience into a space that allows them to belong.

When religion is introduced into the negotiation, contradictions start to occur. Different generations have negotiated their religious belonging in different ways. Before the Millennial Generation (Generation Y), the church played a different role in society. For nearly five hundred years, the reformed church held significant authority in society, providing congruence to youth experience and reducing the need for them to negotiate their belonging continually. Understanding "young people's practices of belonging means considering the varying and often contradicting significance attached to religious affiliation by individual congregants in the situations they find themselves in." [35] Emerging generations experience a strong disconnection between their faith communities and the experiences of daily life. We will look at the data in

33. Habib and Ward., *Identities, Youth and Belonging*, 61.
34. Habib and Ward., *Identities, Youth and Belonging*, 48.
35. Habib and Ward., *Identities, Youth and Belonging*, 62-63.

Chapter 4 of this thesis to help explain which experiences have the most considerable effects on the practices of belonging.

Ultimately, youth are living life outside of the church more than inside of the church. In the case of the Zimbabwe migrants, the "presence of religion in public spaces has adverse implications for the creation of social life." [36] The large decline in faith communities suggests that it is quite difficult for youth to negotiate their belonging as they experience "a mismatch between ideology and everyday reality." [37]

Belonging through Membership

Jonathon Haidt argues that morality which binds and blinds without rising above self-interest causes division. [38] Often, group membership is based on morality, yet membership has played a significant role in the sense of church belonging for centuries. Today, church membership provides a sense of connection in specific denominations. To others, it portrays a violation of care or compassion. To others, it is a mere administrative exercise with very little meaning. Belonging is the ontological result of committed membership.

Membership is not precisely clear in the early apostolic church. The criteria for membership were based on "the importance of every believer's becoming an integral part of a group of believers and making a firm commitment to it." [39] There is a popular movement at play in western Christian communities that encourages the church's return to the apostolic church we read about in the book of Acts. That could prove problematic as the apostolic church would be very ill-equipped for the modern era and would ignore God's ongoing redemptive work in creation. However, it is helpful to learn from this concept of membership.

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36. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 63.
37. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 63.
38. See section titled "Belonging from Morality" in Chapter 3.
39. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 969.

Brooks highlights the importance of commitment to a philosophy or faith, and Erikson is making the same observation of the early church. The sacrificial love of Jesus drove many to commit their lives to faith. They committed to membership. In this way, Brooks and Erickson agree that love and community result in relationship. In the form of relationship, membership is very important.

The Christian life can only be lived in full consideration of the community. This is not an argument for visible membership in an institution, but it is an argument for membership that creates a sense of belonging so that we might have life and have it abundantly (cf. John 10:10). As is evident by Jesus's interaction with the temple in the Gospels, "membership in a visible group is no guarantee whatsoever of justification in God's sight, so the visible organization is relatively unimportant. In fact, some deny the necessity of being part of an organized body." [40]

Erikson is not arguing against community or groups but is recognizing the fact that some do not see a need to belong to a church. Instead, the church is defined by something less visible. Invisible membership says, "wherever there is salvation, there the church is also." [41] This theology is highly pervasive among emerging generations. "I am spiritual and believe in God but have no interest in the church" is the refrain of a vocal generation.

The emerging generations are not the first to enter into this conversation. On October 11, 1962, Pope John XXIII opened the Vatican II ecumenical council. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, this Catholic council church recognized a larger view of membership in the church. The centuries of fissures seen within the church created a need to reorder the idea of membership and salvation. Vatican II established that all members of God's community fit into

40. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 967.
41. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 838.

three categories: 1. incorporated Catholics, 2. Non-Catholic Christians, and 3. Non-Christians related to the church. [42]

Denominational conciliar efforts rarely appear in any culture-shaping way. Fellowship between churches often appear to be symbolic and lack meaningful resource-based relationships. The more prevalent means of viewing unity and membership is that of spiritual unity. The "Christians who regard church unity as essentially spiritual in nature usually emphasize the purity of doctrinal belief and lifestyle as criteria for membership." [43] The charter of an organization "determines the qualifications of membership."[44] This doctrine and lifestyle are often outlined in the charter of an organization.

Social sin is often a grave membership violation. Often, institutional systems, positions, and sacraments are weaponized against those who commit social sins. Social sins prove to be a problematic membership standard for several reasons. First, we do not hold ourselves accountable to group standards when we are not in charge because we do not play an active role. [45] Further, we are often "so conditioned by membership in a group that our very perception of reality is colored by it." [46]

Lastly, "we may not recognize group selfishness because it may actually involve individual unselfishness." [47] In this circumstance, the individual is being sacrificial because they do not benefit from the group, committing social sin. When we do not see the sin or are not responsible for the social sin, it is not a violation of membership. However, in most cases of social sin, the group is violating its own membership standards. While the group holds standards

42. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 838.
43. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1011.
44. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 21.
45. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 586.
46. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 586.
47. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 586.

and will hold some members responsible, they rarely hold everyone responsible. The members of the group often violate their own membership standards in secret to save face.

Belonging through Grace

Fear as a symptom, in Brook's discussion, had to do with commitment. Sharon Hersh talked about fear in the light of grace. Fear stops us from being able to extend the grace that creates belonging for ourselves and others. Both Hersh and Brook recognize the need to surrender certain aspects of our lives to live courageously. We need courage if we want to bring grace into our conversations and our relationships. Belonging comes from graceful conversation, graceful relationships, and the courage to overcome offense. Hersh defines a personal offense as "a rigid sense of who is 'in' and who is 'out.'" [48] While this is a personal offense, the church has taken the same approach to offense. Except this offense is institutionalized as an offense to God's holiness.

The church cannot take this stance while saying they also practice love and grace. The church cannot be offended when Jesus took all offense to the cross and ascended through that same offense. Again, the church leaves Christ out of the church when it institutionalizes personal offense. We must rest in the goodness of God and surrender our authority to decide what is holy in the eyes of the church. One of Hersh's clients described this experience aptly: "Why would I have faith or trust love when I can't find any real evidence of it at home, school, or church?" [49]

Conversations between the church and society are nothing more than relationships between people. People are what make up the institutions. If one person were to leave an institution, that institution would likely continue, but that institution would cease to exist if all

48. Sharon A. Hersh, *Belonging: Finding the Way Back to One Another* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2020), 125.

49. Hersh, *Belonging*, 125.

people left it. Jesus calls people into relationship with the divine church and entrusts us with the relationships therein.

In chapter two, I discussed the redemptive arc narrative of the Holy Scriptures. In this view of a historic movement, creation is yet to resolve into something new. Our role is to engage in the timely redemptive work of the spirit that is ongoing and changing. The role is different than it was and will be different in the future. Grace allows us to be a part of stories that don't always make sense. Most stories will not be resolved "until redemption is complete in heaven, but we can participate in a communion of stories here on earth—if we don't dismiss other people's experiences."[50] Relationships with others and their stories create belonging. However, we must not enter a relationship with ulterior motives. We often invite people into relationships because it benefits us, our numbers, or our coffers. This motive implies relational violence. Sharon Hersh defines relational violence as "harm expressed through direct or nuanced beliefs; language and behavior including demeaning dismissive and demanding messages. Relational violence also includes complete withdrawal from the relationship in the midst of dialogue." [51] It might not seem violent at first glance, but the sharp nature of these subtle movements causes wounds. These wounds polarize and tribalize our religious communities.

Bonhoeffer and Erickson describe traditional means of Christian belonging. Grace must be present for the community to exist. However, traditional membership is not often full of grace. Rather, social membership is full of relational violence, which discourages young people from continuing their effort to negotiate belonging. We have forgotten how to engage in community and membership in a way that recognizes real people created in the image of God – Imago Dei.

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50. Hersh, *Belonging,* 156.
51. Hersh, *Belonging*, 114.

> Imagine a world where every human interaction is viewed as a gift—where there is no distinction based on ethnicity, philosophy, socioeconomic demographic, or gender because everything we have is a "gift…coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights. (Jas 1:17, NIV)[52]

Hersh asserts that perhaps what we are looking for is in each of our interactions, both the good and difficult ones. [53] Maybe the answer to an emerging generation that is lonely and anxious is found in relationship. Even more powerful when this relationship is with the divine and amongst the church. To do this, we must "open the door to different opinions, to wrestle with our perspectives, and to connect with people no matter what side they are on." [54] The result of this is a beautiful community of people who are simply together at all costs. People in relationship, through grace, belong to one another.

> An environment of common grace creates a world where there is no room to be personally offended, no need to be afraid of engaging with others, and no value in hammering at different topics dogmatism to prove we are right. Rather than turning anyone away in condemnation or uncomfortability, when we advocate for the dignity of common grace, we see every conversation as a gift. We begin to anticipate conversations as a way to expose the brilliance of God's love instead of our own brilliance. We can have conversations on any topic and with any person, trusting God himself will use every interaction to deepen our collective hunger for life.[55]

Conclusion

Belonging often exists on a sliding scale and may need to be re-negotiated. Belonging is essential to life and must be negotiated for a healthy life. In this chapter, I called attention to the complexity of identity, values, and behaviors concerning belonging. I also reviewed literature, research, and thought on belonging, community, and belief. These topics include commitment, morality, wilderness, place, Christian community, membership, and grace.

52. Hersh, *Belonging*, 122.
53. Hersh, *Belonging*, 135.
54. Hersh, *Belonging*, 142.
55. Hersh, *Belonging*, 122-123.

- Commitment: Large commitments are required to find a sense of connection over tribalism. Motivational love is required to make true commitments.
- Morality: "Morality binds and blinds" people into polarized tribes based on value systems. [56] We must rise above self-interest regarding morals and groups. And we must remember that Jesus is interested in both morality and groups of people.
- Wilderness: Loneliness and belonging are the characteristics of this era's wilderness spiritual crisis. We need belonging to live, but comfort is the idol that obstructs true relationship and belonging.
- Christian Community: Christian community is unified and bound around faith. Unity in the Christian community comes through the alien righteousness of Jesus, meaning that manmade standards of belonging to the church exclude Jesus.
- Place: I reviewed the importance of multiple layers of place and sociology. Place is not only geography but is also technology, ideology, and sociology. To understand the emerging generations, we must recognize and understand the contradiction between faith systems and not based faith systems.
- Membership: Belonging is the truest result of membership. Early church membership was defined by group and commitment. Modern efforts at ecumenical unity or belonging have ceased since the Vatican II council, which expanded the view of who belongs to the church. Rather than focusing on unity, we have weaponized institutional systems, positions, and sacraments against social sins.

56. Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, 369.

- Grace: Through grace and courage, we can overcome personal offense and relational violence. When we can show up to be with one another, we find a group of ragged hearts who belong to one another.

Go. Invite everyone. Whisper or shout, "'Welcome! There's bread and wine. Come eat with us and talk.' This isn't a kingdom for the worthy; it's a kingdom for the hungry. You belong! [57]

57. Hersh, *Belonging*, 160.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT DESIGN

Introduction

You could see the fury and sadness in his eyes. It was almost as if he was fighting for something but had also given up. It was not so much what was said but perhaps what was not said. This was his group of friends, the people he had known for years. The people who lived life together. He had listened to and believed in the same Gospel narrative. For some reason, it did not seem to be real in the same way. Something had changed. It was hard to understand, but suddenly he felt as if he was on a different planet from those sitting in the same small church group.

He was desperate for God and desperate for love. He knew that he would always believe in God but could not find a reason to stay in the church. What was their purpose? He was a high performer, well educated, Caucasian, had a great family, and was a model citizen. As the group talked, the anger started to build. Why was he so mad at the church? Why didn't he feel like he could be known or welcomed in a group that he had been a part of for years? It came from nowhere. He suddenly blurted aloud, "I'm gay." He was horrified. He knew at that moment that he would be welcomed but never "belong." The group went silent as he stood to leave, enveloped in all-consuming shame. He knew at that moment that he would never return.

We must ask ourselves, why does belonging matter to the church? The church has served as a social anchor to American society for generations. Yet generations are fleeing the church in alarming numbers. Tribes are increasingly polarized, and religion is more political than faithful. Despite the depth of this chasm, there is still a strong human desire to belong. In a tribal,

anxious, and lonely world, we all crave an experience of place and love. What matters to humanity must matter to the church.

Scripture is riddled with references to connection and belonging to God and God's family: little children belong to Jesus (c.f. Matt 19:14), those who belong to God hear his voice (c.f. John 16:15), some are called to belong (c.f. Rom 1:6), we belong to God (c.f. Rom 7:4). Where do the criteria for belonging come from? Who interprets, declares, and decides the criteria? The test for belonging has become a social standard for holiness. Just as an elite club has requirements for membership, the church has behavioral indulgences due at the alter to earn righteousness. I set out to understand these barriers of entry in the view of emerging generations.

Starting Line

The research goal was to identify barriers to church and belonging for emerging generations. In a sense, what standards have been established for belonging? What standards have the leaders of the North American church set for membership and connection to their community? That is where the research started: research questions were first asked of senior pastors, missionaries, lay ministers, and evangelical influencers.

The researcher and the participant would sit down over coffee or a meal for questions. During the process, it became clear, very quickly, that the answer would not be found here. These leaders, wonderful in their own light, were blind to this problem of connection and belonging. It was as if the questions were being asked in a foreign language. Either the wrong questions had been developed or an ethical leadership problem had been uncovered. Further research was required in order to understand the disconnect between the perceived problem and what these positional leaders deemed as little more than a psychological concern.

These results were discouraging. It was evident that these leaders were concerned with the small personal details of people under their charge. However, it was also clear that their response was indicative of training that was explicitly focused on the scriptures, preaching, spiritual formation, liturgy, evangelizing, and work of the holy. Perhaps there was more behind the responses, but it appeared that these leaders were better trained to handle the scripture than to handle the complex nature of sociology and interpersonal relationships.

Searching for A Dynamic Population

This realization drove the research towards a new population: not the leaders and not the faithful but instead the youth and the marginalized. The focus became the future of the church and the view of emerging generations. Emerging generations are made up of individuals under the age of thirty-eight (38). People in this category come from three (3) generations, the Millennial Generation, Generation Z, and Generation A. Due to age, most of the respondents come from the Millennial Generation and Generation Z.

The research design was based on these demographics and the needs of the population. This population is not easy to identify. They are incredibly dynamic and often avoid traditional religious organizations. So, a research partnership was established with a large metro, inclusive and biblical church. Starting with this group, the identified population was broken down into three categories to maintain a structure: Group A, Group B, and Group C. Group A individuals identify as Christians, are of any age, and are involved in a church community. Group B individuals identify as Christians, are under the age of 38 but may or may not be involved in a church due to belonging barriers. Group C individuals are of any age, those who are no longer involved in a church community and do not identify with a faith tradition. For this study, the

focus of the survey is group B individuals. The people who will understand barriers the best are often the ones hardest to reach because they lack the connections ideally used to identify them.

The first attempt at this effort took the form of an extensive population survey. The initial findings were exciting but insignificant. More people were needed, so similar and familiar communities of believers in the city were polled. Using grassroots connections within these familiar communities, a wide net of connections was made. The researcher began to reach out to anyone near the target age group with experiences of a faith community. Finally, the researcher began to connect with and find the desired population.

These surveys focused on a sense of belonging and connection. The researcher wanted to know what mattered to people regarding connection and if they were experiencing it in their faith community. Further, the researcher wanted to know if technology, culture, context, and societal events impacted connection. Most importantly, the researcher wanted to understand why these things mattered. Suddenly the data started to render a picture of belonging that was used as the foundation for understanding belonging.

At first glance, the data seems homogenous. However, upon a deeper review, it is increasingly heterogeneous and complex. It is complex because of the varying worldviews and characteristics describing the individuals in this study. Nearly four hundred (400) data sets were collected through surveys from dynamic, dispersed, and ecumenical populations who have been or are currently involved in a Christian faith community. Once an individual met the age and faith community qualification, they completed a survey that focused on a sense of connection, belonging, technology, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Then the whole data set was compared to data collected from an urban evangelical church. Listed below are the top ten (words) or phrases

listed by the respondents as *potential barriers to the church* or *important factors to belonging or connection*.

Table 5

Potential Barriers and Important Factors Compared

Table 4.1 Potential Barriers and Important Factors Compared					
Potential Barriers to the Church All Respondents			Potential Barriers to the Church Local Metro Church Respondents		
1	Type of Church		1	Friends	
2	Community		2	Group	
3	Faith		3	Time	
4	Feelings		4	Type of Church	
5	Time		5	Connections	
6	Friends		6	Searching	
7	Missing Values		7	Missing Values	
8	Newness		8	Others	
9	People		9	Small	
10	Busyness		10	Apathy	
Important Factors to Belonging All Respondents			Important Factors to Belonging Local Metro Church Respondents		
1	Community		1	Acceptance	
2	Faith		2	Accountability	
3	Accountability		3	Faith	
4	Jesus		4	Growth	
5	Relationships		5	Support	
6	Support		6	Community	
7	Being Known		7	Connections	
8	Being Together		8	Consistency	
9	Trust		9	Encouragement	
10	Acceptance		10	Fellowship	

Potential barriers to the church are defined by those who responded that they did not feel a strong sense of connection or belonging to their faith community. In the metro sampling, 55.8% reported that they felt somewhat connected or not connected to their faith community. Meanwhile, 43.4% of all respondents reported that they felt somewhat or not connected to their faith community. This figure suggests that nearly half of all emerging generation participants in a faith community do not feel a strong sense of belonging.

The individuals representing a dynamic portion of a metro church listed friends, groups, and time as the top three (3) potential barriers to experiencing a sense of belonging in their

community. Comparing this response to all respondents, the top three (3) potential barriers to experiencing a sense of belonging in their community are type of church, community, and faith. Friends, kind of church, time, and missing values appeared on both lists. In themselves, these words give us only a hint to what is causing this sense of isolation. Individuals who self-identified as having some to a lot of trouble connecting to their faith community reported the words portrayed in the word clouds below.

Figure 1. Potential barriers: metro church word cloud.

Figure 2. Potential barriers: all responses word cloud.

All respondents were given the opportunity to respond to a similar question to the previous. It was a goal of the research to identify the most critical factors needed to create a sense of belonging. The people who responded to this question included those who have left their community, those who do not experience a sense of belonging, those who somewhat experience a sense of belonging, and those who experience a strong sense of belonging and connection to their faith community.

Participants reported acceptance, accountability, and faith for the metro church as the three (3) most important factors in creating a sense of belonging. In contrast, all participants reported community, faith, and accountability as the most factors in belonging. Appearing on both lists are accountability, faith, support, and community.

Figure 3. Important factors: metro church word cloud.

Figure 4. Important factors: all respondent word cloud.

Since about half of the participants reported a sense of disconnection with their faith community, it is not a surprise that some of the potential barriers are also important. Appearing on both lists are faith, community, and connections. Simply, potential barriers and important factors are intertwined. While there are specific results here, it should be noted that the data becomes very heterogeneous to a congregation or denomination as the details are analyzed.

Nearly all participants reported an increased value of technology regarding connection and increased anxiety and loneliness due to the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Most participants reported a decreased sense of belonging or connection to their church after the emergence of COVID-19. Before the emergence of COVID-19, loneliness and anxiety appeared to be on the rise. A viral pandemic seems to be exacerbating these social and liturgical pandemics.

The extreme context of this problem and the factors identified by participants lays a solid foundation for an understanding of belonging in the church. However, several of these factors might be lumped together depending on the intent of the participant. It is also unclear what some of these factors might mean pragmatically for liturgical practice. Since intent should not be assumed, it is important to understand what is behind each of these factors. Why did the participants identify these factors and report a sense of increased disconnection, anxiety, and loneliness in the church?

Looking for the Why

In order to find meaningful results, the research target morphed and began to focus on understanding why participants were reporting these results. It became apparent the data pool was becoming more ecumenical, introducing lots of new factors. A population of young people searching for a place to belong is bound to be on the move. They are also likely viewing the

world through a new dynamic lens. This data was helpful, but a new framework was needed to describe the angst being experienced by these faith community members.

This larger dynamic worldview creates some conflict in how to discuss the connection. In a larger ecumenical view of the church, there are too many priority value systems. As discussed previously, an evangelical group can be characterized in one way, but another group might be characterized in another; however, one group does not diminish the value of the other within the cosmic depth of Christianity. So, in an effort to engage the "why" behind the data set, a larger view of the faith system had to be considered. In a sense, some of the 'rules that are usually important do not apply to the larger group. In a dynamic world, a modern framework for moral systems in the church was needed to engage the emerging generations. Returning to Jonathan Haidt, a social psychologist in pursuit of moral epistemology, defined moral systems as

> interlocking sets of values, virtues, norms, practices, identities, institutions, technologies, and evolved psychological mechanisms that work together to suppress or regulate self-interest and make cooperative societies possible. [1]

Dr. Haidt goes on to say he defines "morality by what it does, rather than by specifying what content counts as moral." [2] This works well in theology because, in a redemptive view of creation, the ontology of theology is relationship. In a pious view of creation, it is most important to determine the purest form of theological morality. However, the initial survey results do not support purity or holiness as an essential factor in connection or belonging. Instead, the results are related to "values, virtues, norms, practices, identities, institutions, technologies and evolved psychological mechanisms" that emerging generations have identified as critical to connection.

So, there is a vague list of moral systems that prohibits and enhances belonging. Taking inspiration from Dr. Haidt's research methods and six (6) foundations of morality, follow-up

1. Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, 314.
2. Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, 314-315.

interview questions were built to focus on ecumenical modern church moral systems. In addition to Dr. Haidt's foundations of morality, identity and culture were included based on the research's initial findings. Volunteering participants were invited to participate in this modern moral and scenario-based interview.

Descriptive scenarios of individuals who participated in their Christian faith communities were read to the participants. The person or multiple persons were described in these scenarios, listing facts about their identity, culture, behavior, or values. These factors fit into a moral system category related to identity, care, liberty, fairness, loyalty, authority, or sanctity. As these scenarios were described, the participant was asked which factors increased a sense of belonging or connection and which factors decreased a sense of belonging or connection.

Nearly all participants pushed back prior to answering the questions. While the questions were straightforward, the participants wanted more information before answering them! It was like watching a doctor run a patient's symptoms through a checklist to diagnose a patient. Participants appeared to attempt a calculated effort to understand why the person in the scenario identified as they did and why they behaved a certain way. The response indicated that if the motivation could be understood, the participants could assign a good or bad value to the behavior. In other words, if a person could be fully known, they could be judged on the correctness of the person and their choices. The question behind this line of questions is most often: is this person good or bad?

After introducing the first set of factors, a second set of more personal factors was introduced. These factors are present in all of our lives but are not known by many, especially if they identify with the Christian faith. These factors are more commonly shared among people

who do not identify with the Christian faith. For Christian community members, if they are known, they are spoken about in the hushed confessional or spoken to a trusted companion.

These factors were designed to emulate numerous ideas or behaviors that might be viewed as a sin, with sin being the ultimate violation of what is moral. Sin has been defined by different groups in different ways. In some circles, sin is anything that separates a person from God. In other groups, there are different types of sin. A more traditional view of sin includes three positions: grace, venial and mortal. If a person is under grace, they are in right relationship with God. If they are living with venial sin, it is impacting their relationship with God. However, if a person is committing mortal sin, they have a completely broken relationship with God. Sin is often seen as right or wrong – what is moral or not moral. Ryrie describes sin in scripture this way:

> Sin may properly be defined by using all these descriptive words for its various forms as recorded in the Old and New Testaments. Such a definition would be accurate though lengthy. Indeed, it might be a good idea to define it thus: sin is missing the mark, badness, rebellion, iniquity, going astray, wickedness, wandering, ungodliness, crime, lawlessness, transgression, ignorance, and a falling away.
>
> More briefly, sin has generally been defined as lawlessness (from 1 John 3:4). This is an accurate definition as long as the law is conceived of in its broadest sense, that is, defection from any of God's standards. Strong furnishes an example when he defines sin as "lack of conformity to the moral law of God, either in act, disposition, or state."
>
> Sin may also be defined as against the character of God (from Rom. 3:23, where the glory of God is the reflection of His character). Buswell defines sin in this way: "Sin may be defined ultimately as anything in the creature which does not express, or which is contrary to, the holy character of the Creator."
>
> Certainly, the chief characteristic of sin is that it is directed against God. (This may be expressed in relation to God's Law as well.) Any definition that fails to reflect this is not a biblical one. The cliché that categorizes sins as against self, against others, or against God fails to emphasize the truth that all sin is ultimately against God (Ps. 51:4; Rom. 8:7). [3]

3. Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 243.

Ryrie argues that sin is against God primarily and not against people. So why then does the church take such great offense to sin? Is the church responsible for the defense of God? If in the system of grace, venial and mortal sin remains, what is the church's responsibility in that system?

Emerging generations view sin and morality as a more fluid matter. Barna reports that "moral relativism hasn't just crept into the worldview of Gen Z; it is now the majority opinion." [4] Nearly two-thirds of Generation Z believes that what is right and wrong changes based on context. This may suggest a leaning towards grace over venial and mortal sin. If Jesus did fulfill the law in its fullness, then lawlessness cannot exist in the embrace of Jesus. Grace gains a stronger position on the topic of sin and morality. When Jesus is at the center, grace reigns. When the law is at the center, venial and mortal sin reigns.

This research explored the complexity of this moral relativism in connection with belonging. However, in this study, it was important to know what these ethical systems do rather than evaluate the ontology of a given moral virtue. These additional factors were introduced into the scenario to understand the impact of "sin" language on connection and belonging in the church. In nearly all cases, they resulted in a sense of shame, guilt, lifestyle conflict, and disconnection, depending on the type of church.

The table below describes the highest instance of a data point being identified as either a factor that increased a sense of connection or belonging or a factor that decreased a sense of connection or belonging.

4. Barna Group, "Gen Z."

Table 6

Increases and Decreases a Sense of Belonging

Table 4.2 Increases and Decreases a Sense of Belonging

Increases Sense of Belonging		Decreases Sense of Beloning	
Identity or Culture	24.02%	Identity or Culture	34.67%
Care Behavior or Value	22.35%	Care Behavior or Value	8.00%
Liberty/Freedom Behavior or Value	2.79%	Liberty/Freedom Behavior or Value	21.33%
Fairness Behavior or Value	11.73%	Fiarness Behavior or Value	10.00%
Loyalty Behavior or Value	20.11%	Loyalty Behavior or Value	12.67%
Authority Behavior or Value	12.29%	Authority Behavior or Value	13.33%
Sanctity Behavior or Value	6.70%	Sanctity Behavior or Value	12.67%

Identity and culture are the highest factors in both increasing and decreasing a sense of belonging. Identity and culture are embedded deeply in who we are as people. Where we came from, who our parents are, and how we grew up. Our worldview defines our identity and culture most often. These are stable characteristics in a person and do not usually change. When they do change, it takes long periods or large life events.

Participants most often associated identity or culture with work or busyness associated with responsibility, race or nationality, sexual identity, relationship, or time together and singleness. [5] Gender was also associated with identity or culture, but not in significant numbers. [6] This suggests that emerging generations are less concerned with gender barriers in the church. It is also likely associated with certain denominations or branches. This signals that gender roles are not as significant to belonging due to increasing normative behavior in the greater Christian faith community.

Care and loyalty were the second-highest factors that increased a sense of belonging. In other words, if someone experiences care or loyalty, they are more likely to experience a sense of

5. Over 40% of respondents listed these factors as a definition of identity or culture.
6. 15% of all participants reported gender in association with identity or culture.

belonging and connection. A positive experience of identity or culture would be the celebration of one's perception of self and culture.

Moving onto behaviors and values, a person that is caring displays compassion or kindness. [7] Additionally, a loyal person exhibits group pride, anger towards those who violate group values, patriotism, and self-sacrifice. [8] If an emerging generation member were to experience a positive sense of identity, culture, care, or loyalty, they would also experience an increased sense of belonging.

Next, liberty and freedom were the second-highest factors that decreased a sense of belonging. Meaning that if someone experiences a lack of liberty or freedom, they are more likely to experience a sense of not belonging and disconnection. A negative experience of identity or culture would be a condemnation of one's perception of self and culture.

Referencing behavior and values, someone who violates liberty or freedom takes away the freedom of choice for an individual or group. If an emerging generation member were to experience a negative sense of identity, culture, and freedom, or they would also experience a decreased sense of belonging. Liberty and freedom are not exclusively American cultural values but are heavily valued in western society, especially in relation to connection within a spiritual community.

These categories are important for the overarching Christian faith communities represented in this study. The moral systems described here are only the view of emerging generations and do not represent the whole community of the faithful. Intuitively, there is undoubtedly a difference between generations in the church. It is a frequently researched and discussed topic but not necessarily in the context of these factors.

7. Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, 146.
8. Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, 146.

The interviewees exhibited a complex web of thoughts and perceptions based on past experiences. The world view of emerging generations is influenced by culture but also by mental health, childhood experiences, social factors, and rapidly-changing technology. Depending on the branch or denominational background and the participants' worldviews, different factors were chosen. How could so many people who have identified with a Christian faith community choose different factors? Christians often pride themselves on faithful morality. Yet, it is clear that many Christians hold a substantial variance in opinions on a faith-based moral state. Further, this study suggests that a strong experience of variance in morality, often cited as hypocrisy, may cause many to leave the church. However, they will only occasionally abandon their faith in a deity.

After concluding the scenario-based interviews, I wanted to know why some of these factors served as barriers to belonging and why others did not. So, I relisted factors identified by the participants and asked them why those factors, above all others, would cause a decreased sense of belonging. After pushing and asking additional questions, all limiting factors fit into four (4) categories; 1) shame, 2) divergence, 3) authenticity, and 4) relationship.

Table 7

Barriers to Belonging

Table 4.3 Barriers to Belonging
Authenticity
Divergence
Relationship
Shame

Shame was the highest cited negative effect on a person's desire to be a part of a faith community. Shame is the intense "painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging – something we've experienced,

done, or failed to do makes us unworthy of connection." [9] Notice that the participants did not use guilt or any such synonym. The conviction of wrongdoing is not present.

Instead, the research suggests that there is a sense of shame resulting from an inability to experience connection. During the large group survey, acceptance was noted on both lists as an important factor of belonging. If a person experiences shame around acceptance of identity, culture, behavior, or morals, they will not experience acceptance generally. Therefore, shame serves as one of the barriers to belonging. One participant noticed that these variables "are identifiers of people and so if you use these as identifiers for yourself, and then if that is either not reflected in the church or treated in a way that is uncomfortable or shameful or something like that, then that creates shame, so that creates a feeling that "I am not welcome, I am not wanted; in fact, people think negatively." This participant noted that the church does not know how to talk about "these things" being complex narratives and identifiers of people. This suggests that there is an element of dehumanization that occurs in the church akin to herd mentality.

Now, divergence is unfoundedly related to shame, but it is not the same barrier. Divergence can result in embarrassment but does not always result in shame. Divergence can also result in rejection, refusal, or rebuke. If you are told that you are not allowed to play a particular role in a community due to a social norm, rejection may cause you to want to leave that community. Divergence is simply the disruption of a social norm. In a faith community, social norms are often scripturally or theologically supported. However, all the social normative factors listed in this survey vary based on branch or denomination within the Christian faith.

9. Brené Brown, "Shame v. Guilt," August 22, 2019, https://brenebrown.com/blog/2013/01/14/shame-v-guilt/.

It is also important to notice that participants reported social norms and sameness in behavior and identities. So, when a social norm is violated, there is divergence within that unique church's tradition. If we return to our surveys, the type of church and values are listed as potential barriers to belonging. One respondent observed that ‘if a group has established norms and the variables don’t align with norms, that will create a wedge that separates the group.’

Divergence, in this context, is a departure from the social norms of a particular theological church culture. Here, divergence is tied to the type of church one might attend. If a person deviates from the community's social norms, they will most likely experience a sense of isolation instead of belonging. Nearly all respondents mentioned that divergence comes from being in a certain type of church, meaning that a sense of belonging will depend on the type of church a person attends. One participant observed, ‘We all decide to go to a church that we like to go to.’ Divergence is a clear barrier to a sense of belonging.

Authenticity is a bold topic for discussion in the modern era. Another way to talk about authenticity might be to discuss truthfulness or the genuine nature of something. While authenticity shouldn’t be the only goal in life, it is cited as one of the key components to a sense of connection. A decreased sense of freedom or liberty represses a sense of authenticity and thus serves as a barrier to belonging. Authenticity is often tied to a sense of being known that results in relationship. Returning to our large group surveys, we noticed that accountability was an important factor in belonging. In this analysis, authenticity and accountability are directly correlated as a means of being fully known. They can occur in many ways, including confession, small groups, and faith communities. The desirable result of authenticity is relationship.

Is it possible to be known, affirmed, and welcome? Is it possible for someone to feel welcome if their identity, culture, behavior, or value is not affirmed? Welcoming and affirming

need distinction. The data points are clear: an individual who experiences shame or diversity through identity, culture, behavior, or values will not experience a sense of belonging or connection. According to the emerging generations, a person who is not universally affirmed will not experience a sense of being welcome. This means that a person needs unconditional affirmation to feel safe and welcome. A conditional response to affirmation says: 'we love you but...' or 'you are welcome here, but you may not...' Based on this research, a person who does not feel welcome is highly unlikely to participate in a Christian faith community unless they have other valuable connections that are dependent on that community.

Lastly, the lack of belonging often impacts a person's ability to have a meaningful relationship. Further, a lack of relationships negatively impacts a person's sense of belonging. Factors listed as reducing a sense of belonging frequently reduce the chance of a meaningful relationship. A relationship is how two or more people interact and relate to one another. Here, relationship could also be between the church organism or the divine and the person participating in the community. Relationship is not about doing things, nor is it a chore. Rather, relationship is about communication, time, touchpoints, investment, and involvement. It results from being known. One respondent, in the context of relationship, noted that "it's hard, and a lot of work, and is simultaneously like super straightforward and super complex."

Factors that reduce a sense of belonging also reduce a change in the relationship because of how they impact the social norm. For example, in one scenario, the individual works as a dentist, is in the military reserves, and works with the homeless. All these factors are morally good things. What they do, however, is they take up the individual's time. That time and investment are not given to the faith community itself. Since this reduces time, touchpoints, and experiences with the faith community, the individual experiences poor relationships with those

who make up the faith community. This individual is a productive and good member of society. They might even be a strong and faithful Christian. Strong and faithful are characteristics not within the bounds of any cultural standards. However, 'strong' a Christian this individual is, she will not experience a sense of belonging to the church since there are relationship barriers.

There are a few problems with these barriers in the context of a faith-based moral system. Western faith-based moral systems are most frequently based on scriptural interpretation, tradition, and theologies. It might be nice to simply tear down these barriers, but that probably wouldn't work because the moral systems are not so simple. The significant value of this system is to ensure the standards of the social norm. These identity, culture, behavior, and moral standards create the culture in which a person experiences sameness. As discussed in chapter 3, sameness is best described by people who are similar.

On one side of the narrative, the group is encouraged to practice secrecy, which is most often learned through implied behavior. Watching a member of the congregation being excommunicated strikes fear into the heart. Keeping social violations a secret protects you from everything except fear itself. It is comfortable and provides psychological relief in the guise of holiness, which encourages ongoing secrecy in the group. It is better to keep a small sin secret than to upset the group's social norm. However, secrecy also decreases the ability to connect or have relationships. When or if the secret is revealed, accusations of dishonesty and unbridled sin will be prevalent.

On the other side of the narrative, it is important to confess one's sins and bring light to the darkness. Vulnerability is celebrated through testimony. However, it is only celebrated by transforming identity, culture, behavior, or morals into compliance with social norms. If there is disagreement in identity, culture, behavior, or morals, then vulnerability results in shame or

dissonance. In this case, divergence does result in shame. However, in a culture where social compliance is not an expected norm, vulnerability increases the ability to connect with people of the same tribe.

A theology of our fallen nature may suggest that every Christian violates the social norm of idealism or perfection. Divine dependency for salvation is Christian dogma. Creation is rent and in need of redemption. With that foundation, the modern Christian is left with an awful choice. The first choice is to live in a community with secrets, ensuring social norms and comfort. However, they will live without connection, being anxious and lonely. The second choice is to live in a community with utter vulnerability, often resulting in shame. However, they will only be able to connect with like-minded and similar people. They will be ostracized from groups that disagree with them and may experience severe isolation. This isolation often includes family and the church. Most people will live on a sliding scale between these two choices: the first being to fit in and the second being known. This research suggests that emerging generations are continually fighting the tension between belonging and social holiness. Therefore, compartmentalization is common until a state of equilibrium is (if ever) established in the community.

This tension is at the root of the current perceived liturgical hypocrisy. The dichotomy of these two choices requires a tension that spiritual leaders are unable to tolerate. The normative culture of the western church appears to demand the issuance of behavioral indulgences. These indulgences allow pastoral leadership to define the good and the bad cleanly. It is comfortable and safe for us to know who is allowed into the temple and who is not allowed into the temple. Comfort enables us to cleanly define the proper allowance of the Eucharist to the saved. Comfort

is loved as homogeneous uniformity and yet is utterly dependent on a western worldview of order and morality.

However, this research suggests that the emerging generations don't have a tolerance for the simplicity of a moral standard. Rather, they appear to view the church as an organization that is on trial for hypocrisy. Only a few respondents addressed the moral authority of the church as a significant matter. Further, the research suggests that if a person comes to the church as they are, they may experience entrapment or manipulation rather than belonging or connection.

Emerging generations suggest that a person's experience with the church is merely dependent on the church they have chosen. That indicates various approaches to community. If a person is faced with a situation of entrapment rather than belonging, they should not stay in that context but rather seek to find a faith community full of like-minded people. Even if the person disagrees with the moral factor, they suggest that the offending party find a place to belong. The emerging generations appear to be okay with disagreement but not confrontation.

Emerging generations are capable of empathizing with different belief systems while wanting the best for a person. Even if that person grossly violates their faith-based moral system. In our search for individual church identity and religious purity, we have created a polarized tribal church—one where there is little diversity because diversity violates Christian social norms.

To paraphrase Brenè Brown, an experience of true belonging requires a sense of belonging to oneself and an experience of connection and belonging to a community.[10] The church is a place where humans come to experience the divine and the community of the divine. If a person cannot share their experience within a sacred space that recognizes their humanity,

10. Brown, *Braving the Wilderness*, 31-41.

they will never be welcome, and they will never belong. This research suggests that emerging generations struggle to find a place of belonging to self and to our spiritual communities resulting in an era of disparity.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I noted that nearly half of all emerging generations have a decreased or no sense of connection or belonging to their faith community. I first noted that emerging generations from metro communities and other communities have both different and similar barriers to belonging. However, when all survey participants were included, I noted that accountability, faith, support, and community appeared on both lists.

Then, I noted that morality should be discussed in terms of what it does rather than to determine the nature of a moral postulate. Using Dr. Haidt's six foundations of morality plus identity and culture, we conducted scenario-based interviews. I found that identity and culture can both increase and decrease a sense of belonging. Care and loyalty values are often associated with an increased sense of belonging. Comparatively, a violation of liberty and freedom is associated with a decreasing sense of belonging.

I then asked why particular identities, cultures, behaviors, and morals impact our sense of connection or belonging. These data sets suggest that it is not the moral standard alone but the type of moral standard and its implications in a faith-based moral system that matters. In other words, the impact of the moral standard is more important than the moral standard itself. Returning to our definition of morality – what does morality do? The resulting barriers to belonging were

1. shame,
2. divergence,

3. authenticity, and
4. relationship.

Lastly, I discussed the dichotomy between secrecy and vulnerability in faith-based moral systems. In most faith-based systems, I noted that secrecy protects social norms but decreases the ability to connect. In contrast, vulnerability often results in shame but increases the ability to connect. It is important to note that most Christians exist on a sliding scale, struggling in the tension between two difficult options.

CHAPTER 5

OUTCOMES

Introduction

He was excited to start. He was sitting in freshmen orientation at Massachusetts Institute for Technology (MIT). It had been a long journey from Guangzhou, China, to Boston, Massachusetts. For years, he had been fighting through the Chinese exams and education system so that he could go to America. He was always in the top 1% of the performers in math, science, and English. Meanwhile, his parent had spent years working several jobs to pay for his education. He was determined to honor his father and mother, to perform well.

That Sunday, he was eager to go to an American Christian church. His family had participated in the independent Chinese church. While church was not his priority, he was intrigued and interested in attending the church. If for no other reason than to appease his family's wishes that he remain religious. He understood his faith well and understood English, so he decided to attend a western church rather than a Chinese church.

After some beautiful music was played, the pastor began preaching. He missed the critical verse because he spoke so quickly. He did not understand why the pastor kept making off-handed remarks about the validity of science. He knew that God had created him to be a scientist, and he did not understand the preaching as well as he thought he would. Defeated, he got up to leave the service. As he moved quickly toward the exit, he noticed people smiling but also staring. It was a strange experience, maybe not so good. He felt more like an alien than a Christian that morning.

Our Chinese student has just witnessed the disconnect between the church and the situations he faces in the routine of life. Subtle but decisive experiences led the student to feel

like an alien and left him confused about the experience. These experiences are rooted in the theological, pastoral, moral, ethical, and technical problems outlined in Chapter 1. The theological problem is that non-ministry and work theology is poorly taught. The pastoral situation is an incorrect contextualization of Jerusalem and Exilic leadership ethics. The moral and ethical issue is that spiritual teaching deeply affects our worldview and values. Lastly, the technical problem is about bounded, centered, and universal sets.

This research is concerned with the psycho-sociological impact of the modern church on emerging generations. How can Christians thrive when they struggle to belong? This thesis sought to identify the source of these barriers to the church, barriers to belonging for emerging generations. This thesis's outcome will be threefold: 1) goal, 2) strategy, and 3) tactic. The desired goal is to identify barriers to belonging for emerging generations. The strategy is to look at identity, culture, behaviors, and values. By looking at these factors, a comparison will be drawn between individual values and institutional church values. Lastly, discussion topics will be developed in order to allow liturgical leaders to evaluate their institutional methods in the context of emerging generations.

Barriers to Church Community

Barriers are ideological factors that result in a broken relationship and usually make a social connection or belonging impossible. As a result of the scenario-based interviews, it should be noted that a violation of identity, culture, liberty, or freedom decreases a sense of belonging by the highest margin. The next question to ask is, “Why do these specific ideological barriers cause a reduced sense of belonging and harm community members?”

Based on the research, the primary barriers to the church community are authenticity, divergence, relationship, and shame. To understand the faith experience of the emerging

generations, these barriers should be viewed in the context of place. It would also be beneficial to identify the disconnection between the youth's experience of faith and their routine situations.

Practically, when a church's values are barriers to belonging, the community members experience harm. Examples of church values might include membership, confirmation theological purity, Eucharist/communion, positional roles, morals, or behavioral standards. If the church values participation in a small group but a participant must experience shame to participate, they will not belong. If a person’s authenticity is violated and they cannot serve on a worship team, they will not belong.

The research suggests that emerging generations are concerned about how the church treats people who don’t fit into the paradigm of holiness. This sensation of poor treatment appears to be growing rather than diminishing. Returning to my discussion on work theology, we know that spiritual work is not the only valuable work. There are positions in society that are important to well-being and may be considered more important than a church usher or worship team member. When we hire a doctor to treat cancer, we hope that they are the best doctor available, regardless of their church values or religious affiliation.

Similarly, a look at the historical analogy of the Roman Catholic Church and art could be beneficial. The renaissance church used the best artists to create most of the liturgical art still in use today. Out of the Renaissance period came the art and architecture that is still used to reflect the divine nature. When it matters the most, we do not pick the holiest based on our behavioral standards. When it practically matters, we select the best because it offers the best representation of our redeemed state yet to come. Consequently, the data suggests that giving priority to certain institutional church values creates a wall that stands tall enough that they turn entire generations away from the church.

To Church Leaders

It would normally be the responsibility of pastors, priests, administrators, academics, and church leaders to own this conversation. The research suggests that emerging-generation western Christians are struggling to find their place in the church. So, a good place to start might be with calling: what is the calling of the church in theology?

Church leaders generally relate well to the idea of calling. Leaders have experienced some type of 'call' in life that describes an experience where God gave them a spiritual purpose within the church. However, scripture may indicate a different definition of calling for members of the emerging generations. In Rom 9:24, Paul writes that God calls people out from among the Jewish and Gentile worlds into something else. This word "to call," kaleó (καλέω), implies that someone is identified by name or attributed a name. Paul was writing from experience in this text. Paul's context comes from Acts 9:4, where we read that Jesus called out to Paul using his true name; "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" God called Saul away from one career to be a "chosen instrument." God wanted Saul to be the person that carried God's name "before the Gentiles and kings and children of Israel." (cf. Acts 9:15)

Likewise, the church received its calling and name from Jesus in Matt 9:18: "You are Peter and on this rock I build my church." Jesus used the name, ekklésia (ἐκκλησία) to describe the church. This church name means to be an assembly, gathering, or community. He then goes on to tell Peter that he will give him the "keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

(Matt 16:19) In the context of Peter's proclamation that Jesus is Lord, it appears that God has called the Church to bring together as a community. [1]

So then, what is the calling of the church in theology? Scripture says that God called people out of the Jewish and Gentile nation by name and to be given a name. God started with Peter, calling him from one place to another, and then to be the rock that would be the church.[2] From there, God gave the church, as a community, to bind together. There could be a few interpretations of this complex narrative. In one case, it could be said that the church is an assembly of authority that binds those who are called by name, using a set of rules or standards. This situation might suggest that the church has ultimate authority in matters of theology. The institution would then be responsible for the binding of the community within the standards. This type of rule was evident under the law, where sacrifices were required to meet the community standards (cf. Lev 14:19-20).

In another case, it could be said that the church is an assembly that grows by bringing more people into community together around a common belief. This binding effort places the church within an evangelical framework. The church is now responsible for executing evangelical theology that grows the community rather than being the authority over theology. In response to fundamentalism, evangelicalism rose as an answer to the theological mission. The church went through a large period of growth. Paul Williams notes the prevalence of this movement by writing: "at the begging of the last century, the unequivocal answer to the question of the mission of the church was overseas evangelism." [3]

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1. hos, hé, ho (ὅς, ἥ, ὅ) is a relative pronoun meaning who, which, what, or that. See *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., 725, for further study.

2. See Matt 4:18-22.

3. Williams, *Exiles on Mission*, 115.

Yet, another case could be made that the church brings all of creation into alignment as a community that is focused on bringing creation into the kingdom. This position places the church within a redemption review of theology. Like the evangelical position, the church is responsible for executing theology. However, the church is incomplete without the eternal divine in concert with its calling and mission. Full redemption is the state of complete union, described beautifully by N.T. Wright:

> The word is created good *but incomplete*. One day, when all forces of rebellion have been defeated and the creation responds freely, and it will *both* remain an independent being, other than God, *and also* be flooded with God's own life. This is part of the paradox of love, turned, and so on in a cycle where complete freedom and complete union do not cancel each other out but rather celebrate each other and make one another whole. [4]

The three positions outlined above on the call of the church for theology are 1) a church that has authority over standards, 2) a church that grows the community, and 3) a church that is focused on bringing creation into the kingdom. In each of these cases, the divine creator masterfully crafted each person and called us to be vessels of mercy within the church. In a tumultuous world, a merciful leader living within an assembly of believers is a beautiful leader. Living mercifully while carrying out the work of God represents an eternal order that is in line with a church that works to bring the creation into the kingdom.

God craftspeople everywhere, and then the divine will call them into the temple. We have been identified by name to be vessels of God's mercy. The church has many responsibilities but stopping people from coming to God when God calls is not one of them. Once we have made it into the temple of mercy, it is hard to remember that it was God who called us into the temple. As God calls people into the temple, they are bound into the community for a calling. God crafted many people and called them 'my people' through the salvific work of Christ Jesus for a

4. N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 102.

redemptive purpose (c.f. Rom 9:24-25, Hos 1:10, 2:23). The church mimics this individual nature of calling, but as a community, and works to redeem the collective creation unto the kingdom.

This discussion on calling takes us back to chapter one. In chapter one, I talked about the problems with practical theology and work theology. Based on this argument, the universal church calling in theology should be equally focused on spiritual work and lay work. Nowhere does the church take on the role of the eternal God. Instead, lay workers work to bring creation into the kingdom. Meanwhile, spiritual workers help point us to the eternal God. For church leaders, the question becomes how to do this well in a cultural context. In response to this question, three common models exist today: seeker-sensitive churches, progressive churches, and traditional theology churches.

1. *The Seeker Sensitive Church*: The seeker-sensitive model is often known for its warm welcome and soft theology. The model was developed to create a safe place for people to encounter the church, maybe for the first time. The appeal is aesthetically pleasing and gentle. However, Dr. Keller puts the seeker-sensitive model into this context:

> It over-adapts to the rational, ahistorical, high-modern worldview. These services have typically been calibrated for a very narrow and transitory kind of unchurched person: namely, the college-educated white baby boomer suburbanite. The increasingly multiethnic, urban-oriented, less rational or word-oriented, and more secular generations under the age of thirty-five are not the same kind of unchurched people."[5]

In this sense, the seeker-sensitive have over-adapted theology to a specific worldview and have forgotten the rest. This is a soft theology because it isn't complete. Soft theology cannot

5. Tim Keller, "Evangelistic Worship," October 23, 2019, https://redeemercitytocity.com/articles-stories/evangelistic-worship.

support relationships because the theology violates the essence of a relationship. For someone to have a healthy relationship, they must be known. When a church is based only on a worldview, it could appear one-sided. This data displays a strong desire for real relationships, authenticity, and meaningful narrative among emerging generations. For this reason, seeker-sensitive models will be insufficient in addressing the needs of the next era.

2. *The Progressive Church*: A sense of division is felt heavily in the western church. On one side is the progressive church and on the other, the traditional church. Tim Keller warns against being "colonized" by culture as a Christian. In a video, he notes that many Christians are "being co-opted by either what I call blue state or red state individualism." [6] It is difficult to live in a post-Christian culture and not be absorbed by the culture. This absorption can happen to both progressive and conservative Christians.

There appears to be a growing movement in the progressive organizational movement that has created a sense of intolerance for the intolerant. It may be difficult for someone holding a varying worldview to progressivism to participate in a progressive community. In the pursuit of a liberal or progressive model, they have been absorbed by the culture they wished to serve.

In extreme cases, a progressive church may produce a nullified worldview. It becomes difficult for a congregant to engage society in a spiritual way. If a church moves towards nihilism, there will not be an option for a person with a faith-based worldview to participate in the church. My research suggests that members of the emerging generations are looking for a place to belong where faith-based world views still exist. There is a strong desire for community

6. Timothy Keller, "Tim Keller on Changing the Culture without Being Colonized by It," The Gospel Coalition, February 25, 2019, video. https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/video/tim-keller-changing-culture-without-colonized/.

with other believers, even if there is a variance in doctrine. For this reason, the progressive church model doesn't satisfy the needs of the emerging generations.

3. *The Conservative Church:* The conservative church could also be considered a church with more traditional theology or values. This doesn't suggest that a progressive church doesn't hold conservative values but that they model their church on different practices. Like, the progressive church, the conservative church is at risk of being co-opted by cultural individualism. The conservative church hopes to hold onto its long-held traditions and values, but in doing so, does not welcome the questioning and curious young minds of the next generation. This is a singular worldview focus is much like the progressive and seeker-sensitive models.

This data found that many people still believe in God but no longer associate with the church of their youth. As people walk into the embrace of God but away from the church, I wonder what God is doing. What are the limits of our ability to hear God in a post-Christian society? Have we missed a movement of the Holy Spirit? Many of the liturgical Jews missed the coming of the Messiah and most of the Messianic work during that era.

There are so many good things about our foundation that we do not want to lose. We also must not be found being the church that missed the redeeming work of the Spirit in this era. It isn't uncommon to hear the conservative church being referred to as a Constantan model of the church. This model best works in a pre-Christian or Christian dominate culture. The research suggests that emerging generations do not recognize the authority of a Christian-dominant culture. Therefore, this model may result in smaller and closing churches throughout the western world.

This research focused on marginalized populations and those in emerging generations. One out of every two (1 of 2) respondents reported that they "somewhat feel alone or lonely on a daily basis" or feel "always alone or lonely." The western church is being emptied of the faithful; we are isolating in our homes and building barriers between groups. Not only are we isolating physically, but we engage in the use of digital tools that make it easier to isolate in many areas of life.

If you do not like what is happening in your church or your community, it's easy to go online and find something you do like. While historical societies have been described by tribe, we no longer are completely dependent on one another to survive. This ultra-independence drives us towards a more extreme version of tribalism. Christians are joining seeker-sensitive, progressive, and conservative churches that are absorbing their politically individual culture. According to my research, this absorption of culture forms more extreme tribalism in the name of individualism.

A simple test is to ask two questions to determine if you operate based on tribalism: 1) How far away is your church from your home? and 2) How many churches are in the same Christian branch (e.g., Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Independent) would I pass if I were to drive to church?

Sharon Hersh notices in her counseling practice that she gets "the most push-back from people who use the name of Jesus or a personal interpretation of the Bible adapted to fit today's politics." [7] Jesus did not call us to form our churches into a model that serves cultural politics. Jesus did call us to engage and redeem culture through our work. Our models and methods should not be focused on a seeker, progressive or conservative church model. Rather, this

7. Hersh, *Belonging,* 159.

research suggests that unity through relationship, acceptance, faith, and community is fundamentally required for the church of the future.

Relationships and community are difficult because they cannot be programmed. There is a lot of tension found in diversity and relationships. How do we, as leaders, grow into living with discomfort and tension? First, leaders must teach their congregations that it is okay to live in tension. The church often focuses on the morality of Paul's exegetical work. This work was critical to the context of the Pauline world. However, Paul wisely recognized that to live in tension means to simply know Jesus Christ:

> And I, when I came to you, brothers, did I not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom? For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. (cf. 1 Cor 2:1-5)

Paul was with them in relationship, in weakness, and in fear with the Spirit of God. It was simple but full of tension. Sharon also learned from her counseling practice to kept it simple. She ultimately decided to surrender to tension and relationship. She "decided to stop debating other people's experiences and trust God to be the Storyteller." [8] This is relationship, method, and model full of tension. Let us keep it simple.

To the Seminaries

While much of the disconnect for emerging generations exists between the church and main street, it begins in seminaries. A seminary is often a training program in which there are significant efforts to develop the spiritual and carnal person. Princeton Seminary states "that the purpose of the seminary is: to unite...piety of the heart...with solid learning; believing that religion without learning, or learning without religion, in the ministers of the gospel, must

8. Hersh, *Belonging*, 158.

ultimately prove injurious to the church." [9] In a non-denominational sense, this could be as simple as mentorship or verbal instruction. In a denomination or liturgical church, it could be a more formal education. In an academic sense, a seminary could be institutional to a university or college.

Seminary education continues the tradition of passing on theological knowledge to spiritual leaders. Good seminary training often teaches people how to think theologically. Seminary should teach someone how to think about the divine and about things in the context of the divine. The dominant modern seminary programs require years of discernment, experience, and in-residence education. These programs can take anywhere from three to ten years to complete depending on the academic requirements. This education model is built to a high-modern worldview and church that serves these generations. It is also beneficial to non-western cultures and the churches therein.

Another popular method of spiritual instruction is 'discipleship.' During the great era of western evangelism, rose the para-church organization. Para-church ministries such as Cru, InterVarsity, Focus Missions, and The Navigators built discipleship and missionary programs. Teaching models were developed so that they could be used well on college campuses during summer retreats and after-hours intensives. These programs are often unregulated and may be interdenominational. This model is popular on collegiate campuses but often lacks the practical instruction that enables students to think theologically post-campus life.

To utilize modern technology and address new challenges in churches, seminaries have begun to offer online and modular education. These programs allow for laypersons or persons already involved in a ministry to continue their education. Evening, weekends, and intensives

9. https://www.ptsem.edu/about/history, accessed October 11, 2021.

provide similar opportunities to anyone who is willing to commit their free time to ongoing education. This model is great for people who can't seem to escape the rhythms of life to attend seminary full time but want to go a little deeper than a para-church experience.

These training models share three things in common. Each model trains people to study and to teach the Holy Scriptures. We also prepare them to practice and celebrate liturgy and, in some cases, the sacraments. Lastly, we teach behavioral patterns for holiness.

Of the three models, the online and modular model is the most beneficial. My research found that emerging generations are increasingly dynamic and short on time. Busyness was listed as one of the largest factors in belonging and connection. Members of the emerging generation will increasingly be unwilling to give large amounts of time to seminary. However, the method of instruction is not the only matter of concern based on the research.

Content is also an important factor in church connection. Genuine and authentic faith, focused on the person of Jesus, was a consistent value of emerging generation respondents. Because of the content factor, none of the popular seminary models are sufficient as they lack a connection to the worldview of the emerging western generations. We do not train people to practice counsel in the light of Main Street's reality. We do not train them to administrate or to lead. We do not teach them to live well in tension or relationship. Authentic relationships are vital to emerging generations and the value of connection in the spiritual community.

An alternative model of teaching Christianity removes any formula for perfection. We work out our faith, and we are saved by grace. The tension between these two concepts is as strong as the tension between the various Christian branches. We have trained our pastors to issue indulgences that weaponize the institution, resulting in hypocrisy that is palatable. The

seminary of the future will model content that removes institutional indulgences and finds itself in the tension between main street culture and relationships.

While reformation may be a bad word in some liturgical churches, the emerging generations are calling for a reformation in the seminary. Reformation is not rebellion, and it is not a fracturing movement nor a fight for theological purity. Instead, reformation should be defined as a movement of redeeming our work. Creation needs redemption, and so does spiritual work. The time calls for missionaries, campus workers, priests, pastors, and deacons who are in touch with the experience of reality. Pastors beget pastors as Pharisees beget Pharisees. Seminaries should not beget more of the same but should be to train hopeful redeemers.

To denominational, liturgical, and interdenominational seminaries, I would submit the following technical matters for discussion. These topics are simply conversations that would be interesting to engage with. These topics represent a real-life example of an emerging generation person who met an institutionally weaponized barrier to the church. In a past era, the church could expect a person to conform to social standards before belonging liturgically. In a modern context, that is no longer the case because these barriers are too complex to negotiate.

1. What are the limits of sola *Scriptura*? Indeed, the scriptures are essential to a Christian's faith, but they are not the source of our faith. God is the source of our faith and our scriptures. A pure focus on scripture may result in the idolatry of the scriptures.
2. What is the purpose of apostolic succession? Linear succession does not guarantee theological purity or religious authority. When we build Jerusalem cultures, we are at risk of becoming Levitical Pharisees.

3. Why does a church choose to remain independent and unaffiliated? Can a church be truly non-denominational within a universal church? Does non-denominationalism model isolation and tribalism? This model may serve as a breeding ground for poor theology absent of the greater movement of the spirit.
4. How do denominational dogma and doctrine contribute to unity and peace amongst the church body? When we put purity above love, we may be ignoring the words of Jesus. Jesus is doing the work of sanctification, and our role is one of love. Emerging generations are weary and confused by the ongoing waring divisions.
5. What is the purpose of an indulgence in the church? In reference to chapter 1, why does the church issue behavioral and moral indulgences? As an example, if someone is struggling in their relationship with God, a spiritual leader might encourage them to spend more time reading the scripture or more time praying a certain prayer. This act of behavioral encouragement might provide temporary relief to the believer since the spiritual leader encouraged the behavior as good (or holy). This indulgence may or may not actually benefit the member. This research suggests that these types of so-called "behavioral indulgences" may be abusive or manipulative in nature. Ultimately, the question should be: is this type of encouragement is in line with *sola fide, sola gratia*- or *sacramentum*-based salvation systems?
6. What is the Holy Spirit's role in the Eucharist/Communion? Is it the role of the spiritual leader to withhold or to give communion? This research suggests that communion that is withheld based on identity or morality is viewed in the context of shame. Here, it is important to remember that a person cannot belong anywhere that they also experience shame. Understanding this is a controversial topic, perhaps there

could be an argument that says any person not under grace merely experiences physical nourishment rather than spiritual communion with the body and with the Divine?

7. What is the universal church, and what is its organizational role in the next generation? Eighty-five percent of research respondents reported a barrier to belonging based on the type of church in question. In other words, the church itself is the primary factor in a person's ability to connect or belong. A female business executive may be able to connect better in a church that celebrates female leaders rather than a church that does not encourage female leadership. This research suggests that emerging generations value belonging so much that if someone has a misaligned value to a church, they encourage that person to find a church that will celebrate that person's values, behavior, or identity. Considering this tribal behavior, what is the purpose for branches and denominations in Christianity? Does the church have a responsibility outside of liturgical work? The data suggest that people can experience God in every intentional encounter with a Christian spiritual community. This would suggest that the model of the church in the future will be more ecumenical and embrace a more generous view of membership.

To the Excluded Believers

If you have ever found yourself outside of the church's usual social structure, some of these findings may be disheartening. I hear your refrain: "I tried to engage," "I was hurt when I was vulnerable," or "It's not worth being abandoned again." There is no comfort in the wilderness, and Jesus understands that. Jesus was and is with you in the pain, confusion, and loss.

That phrase does not mean much when we add it to the lineup of meaningless Christian clichés. Perhaps in a more meaningful way, Jesus was physically and unjustly murdered by the church of his day. Jesus tried to help, few of the religious believed him, and he was abandoned by those closest to him. Jesus even failed and was unable to carry his own cross.

> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. (cf. Heb 4:15)

Whatever we do moving forward, we should do with the grace and love of Jesus, our empathetic companion. The Lord of love knows you; the Divine of love embraces you; the Servant of love gives freely to you. As a human, Jesus experienced the real feelings you are experiencing today. Jesus was doubted in the storm, abandoned in the garden, bled anxiety in prayer, and lost everything on the cross. It was love that carried Jesus on this journey. This love was practical. It was real, persistent, and selfless. It still is today.

<u>Jesus As a Human</u>
Born miraculously,
A son and a brother,
Called to save us all,
But weak beyond all measure,
Unable to complete the task assigned,
Weeping, Anxious and Bleeding
Begging to avoid the pain,
Accused, abused, and mocked,
Made bare to care by the lowly
Beat, thrashed and naked,
Unable to carry the cross to death,
Dependent upon the divine creation,
Jesus as a man,
Weak, meek, mild, and gentle,
The servant of love. [10]

Like Joseph of Egypt, in the wilderness, we can be in a relationship with a Divine being that loves us, understands us, and relates to our current tragedy. There is no greater gospel than

10. Walter Wilson, "Jesus As a Human," 2020.

the redemptive work found through experiencing divine love and no more fulfilling life than one found in the embrace of divine love.

On Scripture and Morality

The Scriptures are God's words written for us. Jesus Christ is undoubtedly the manifestation of the scriptures in human form, and the Word continues to guide us in our spiritual journey. For this reason, Scripture holds incredible value and authority. However, we should also be wary of bibliolatry. Herein, bibliolatry should be understood as worshiping the Bible instead of the author. This is a form of idolatry. Bibliolatry was a term framed in the late 1800s:

> Now, this class of people, and it is not a small one, we believe, may be classified as Bibliolaters. They may fairly be said to worship the Bible. Some of them are prepared to affirm the inspiration of the English version. It is remarkable, likewise, to what great length their *faith,* as they call it, will extend in matters of interpretation. The most difficult and unnatural explanation of passage is always to be preferred, inasmuch as the glory of God is thereby seen more clearly. These interpreters find miracles where none were intended. Indeed, they find everything everywhere and anything anywhere. They are, it is true, Bible-worshipers; they are also Bible-destroyers. They have an irrational reverence for the Divine Record, and at the same time rationalism, than which none is more irreverent.[11]

We are not the ultimate arbitrators of truth and goodness in the context of Scripture. However, we do have a responsibility within the structures of the community to engage culture with clear interpretation. This engagement takes on many different forms in different denominations.

The authority of scripture is bound to the person of Jesus. The histories of Biblical canonization and translation are long. However, the value of scriptural authority was noticeably absent from this research result. Meanwhile, the values portrayed by a western reading of the

11. "Bibliolatry." *The Old Testament Student* 3, no. 3 (1883): 92–93.

Bible were critical to a person's ability to connect. The authority of Scripture was never in question, but the interpretation and application were often questioned.

Based on who Jesus was and is, the authority of scripture is not in question. God's beautiful Scripture is good because of Jesus! "So, Jesus' authority and the absolute authority of the Bible stand or fall together. If we believe he was who he said he was, then we must accept the entire Bible as God's word. Jesus' authority and the absolute authority of the Bible stand or fall together. If we believe he was who he said he was, then we must accept the entire Bible as God's word."[12]

Emerging generations value the authority and person of Jesus. In valuing Jesus, they do value the authority of scripture. However, there is a sense of disparity between the interpretation of scripture and the experience of life on Main Street. When a church places morale value on *sola Scriptura*, it impacts unity and doctrine within the community:

> In the Reformed family some adhere to the doctrine of inerrancy or take a very literalistic approach to Scripture. Others have embraced historical-critical methodologies and reject inerrancy and literalistic approaches. There is therefore a challenge to search for wisdom already there in the Reformed tradition that could take it beyond the conservative versus progressive impasse and transcend the present battle lines. Such wisdom could include, for example, Calvin's understanding of Scripture (see Calvin [1509–1564] 2002: 49–55). He uses the language of 'infallibility with respect to Scripture, by which he means that Scripture will not fail to communicate the good news that God wants to convey through it (cf. Nicole 1982:425–442). For Calvin, Scripture provides true knowledge of God, but it does so by functioning like a mirror, giving a true reflection, but not imparting the thing itself. On the one hand, Calvin has a high regard for the authority of Scripture (its unity and sufficiency, its self-authenticating nature); on the other hand, he resists literalism and admits to errors in Scripture and the divine-human tension of the text. Calvin's insight into the dynamic relation of Word and Spirit (Calvin [1509–1564] 2002:49–55) in the work of revelation and his 'principle of divine accommodation' could deliver the Reformed tradition from bibliolatry. [13]

12. Timothy Keller, "Timothy Keller," *Timothy Keller* (blog) https://timothykeller.com/blog/2010/4/27/authority, April 27, 2010.

13. Yolanda Dreyer, Matthias Zeindler, Anna Case-Winters, Rathnakara Sadananda, and Michael Weinrich. "Sola Scriptura: Hindrance or Catalyst for Church Unity?" *HTS Theological Studies* 69, no. 1 (2013). https://hts.org. za/index.php/hts/article/view/2000/3668.

We know that God is good. Without a doubt, the Scripture is inspired and good because of Jesus. The Word is a guide and light in this very difficult life (cf. Ps 119:105). Instead of using the Holy Scripture to draw lines in the sand, perhaps we should allow Scripture to illuminate the author. Allow the light of God's Word to a light path back to the gentle love and grace of an indelible Creator.

The research suggests that the order of morality in the church is no longer correct in relation to emerging generations. In faith-based systems, a moral violation often assumes a victim. The victim of this violation is the divine. The church's offense in divergence is against God, not the church. In response to the offense, the church demands that the guilty party reconcile back to the holy. This often takes place through some type of penance or indulgence, resulting in shame.

We need to remember that morality is not the goodness of a value but rather the result of that value. Now, God is not offended by the violation of a moral value because of the work of Christ. However, God is interested in the redemption of creation to its hopeful newness. Violating morality results in interrupted redemption work. This is a breach of our purpose, but it is not a breach of one's worthiness within the love of Jesus.

Emerging generations crave relationships that allow them to be safe, vulnerable, free, and cared for, all while experiencing loyalty. When we place bibliolatry and morality above the redeeming love of Jesus, that is not possible. Change does not result in love. Love results in a change. Love drives us to the divine and the moral.

Timothy Keller tweeted, "American Christians are still somewhat influenced by "common sense realism." We tend to think our beliefs are self-evident to every rational person.

We are not much aware of our cultural biases and our even deeper worldview presuppositions." (@timkellernyc, November 28, 2020). [14]

An Ethical Leadership Conversation

The discussion on belonging revolves around identity, culture, morality, and behavior. So far, my conclusions have focused on the barriers to belonging and the institution of the church. However, this research also identified factors that increase a sense of belonging: an affirmation of identity, culture, or an act of care or loyalty.

The church's future modeling must recognize the barriers and ensure that we do not leave a void where those barriers once existed. In other words, we must replace barriers with bridges. Bridges are relationship factors that increase a sense of belonging by redeeming barriers to belonging. First, we find people in our communities who can identify the barriers. Then, we start with the identification of barriers. Lastly, we build bridges in places of those barriers. During this process, it is critical that all vulnerability shown does not result in divergence or shame.

In Chapter 1, I described the target population for this study. It is the same population that you want to identify in your church to identify barriers clearly. Group A are Christians are of all ages, faithful Christians. These people fit easily into a bounded set or a Jerusalem culture. Group B are Christians under the age of 38 who have been marginalized or who have voluntarily removed themselves from a faith community due to an unknown barrier. The C group is composed of Christians under 38 who have left the church altogether.

When you start this conversation, you want to start with group B and move into group C. Having a conversation with members of group B and group C can be difficult. It will be impossible to avoid politically charged discussions. Often topics are personal or painful, and they

14. Timothy Keller, https://twitter.com/timkellernyc/status/1332723498163314689

may bring up harmful memories. In Chapter 3, I talked about the concept of belonging. When someone does not experience a sense of belonging, they are missing a fundamental foundation for human life. Our spiritual experiences provide a place of home and psychological safety. When that is torn away, we experience severe pain.

With courage, engage group B and hopefully some group C individuals. Listen, learn, and do not defend. No feedback to the individual is required. You are there to listen, and that is it. Below is a chart to help facilitate your questions when talking about barriers. Other topics may come up during the conversation in your faith community. However, this framework uses the research in this thesis to quickly narrow in on your community's main barriers. So, for example, if you use row one and column one, a question could be: “Do you feel like you can be authentically yourself and share that person with us in the community? If no, why not?” (Authenticity and Identity) Another question could be, “When you are told that your belief or behavior was wrong, did you experience shame? (Shame and Violation of Freedom) How did that affect your relationship with me or your community?” (Relationship and Liberty)

Across the top of this framework are the factors that decrease a sense of belonging. In this framework, identity is associated with a person. Who are you? These are individual characteristics such as: I am female, and I love art. Culture is your experience of identity in a group. Who are you associated with naturally? These are group characteristics such as I am Asian or female. Individual characteristics can create a culture when bounded. Freedom is the virtue related to human nature, our ability to do things without any restrictions. Liberty is the virtue associated with political systems or institutions and the right to operate within a system.

Down the side of this framework, I have placed the barriers to belonging. The barrier of authenticity is associated with integrity and being real, honest, and open with the experience of

life. Being authentic in a church might look like a confession, or it might look like showing up in a t-shirt and shorts because you are running late for service. In this instance, you are allowed to engage the community of faith with the real impact of the human experience.

The next barrier, divergence, is a violation of a social norm. We are not talking about people who are choosing defiance, but rather ***an existing difference through diversity***. If 90% of the community is one race, the remaining 10% exist in divergence from the social norm. In Levitical times, wearing mixed fabrics was a violation of the law and a violation of a social norm. So, divergence can be associated with identity, culture, morality, or behavior. Divergence changes with time, politics, power, and culture.

Relationship is a very complex barrier. I will not pretend to be a relationship expert. In this work, relationships can be between two people, between a person and a group, or between institutions. Relationships are grown slowly but can be destroyed instantly. When you represent an institution or group, you are either growing or destroying relationships with nearly every encounter. I have destroyed my fair share of connections and relationships over the years. I have very few other regrets in my life. That is because it is nearly impossible to restore trust and faith once it is lost. It takes years to rebuild a relationship that was destroyed in a moment. We must always intentionally move into interactions with gentleness, kindness, and an abundance of empathetic love.

Lastly, shame is the most destructive barrier. Returning to Brenè Brown's work on belonging, if someone experiences shame, it is impossible for them to experience belonging. Shame combined with any identity, culture, moral, or behavior will grantee a ruined relationship. Shame is not like guilt or conviction; instead, shame is dehumanizing. One cannot be subhuman and still belong as a human. When we allow shame to become a part of our church culture, we

are reordering creation. Based on these findings, this is bad for the community of believers. This dehumanization is at the root of every great evil in the world, past, present, and future.

Our human moral system, combined with a person's identity alone, does not cause a person to fail in their negotiation for belonging. Instead, it occurs when the barrier to engaging in that moral framework becomes so complicated that a person cannot engage in a way that allows them to belong. It's when an identity, culture, moral, or behavior collides with a barrier that the person leaves the community, voluntarily or otherwise. As an example, if a person cannot hold a position in an institution, that is a violation of their liberty. That may not cause someone to leave a church, but if that same person's relationship is harmed, they may choose to leave or be asked to leave.

Once we have identified the specifics of the barriers in your community, it is time to start building bridges. The framework for building bridges is nearly the same as the framework for identifying the barriers with a few different factors. Bridges are meant to replace obstacles in a complex relationship system resembling a universal set. This chart can be used in the same way as the "tearing down barriers" chart.

Using the "building bridges" chart, we should still focus on the B group and move into the C group. If we can process both charts in the same conversation, it will be more beneficial to both parties because building bridges is hopeful. In a bridge-building framework, care and loyalty are the different factors.

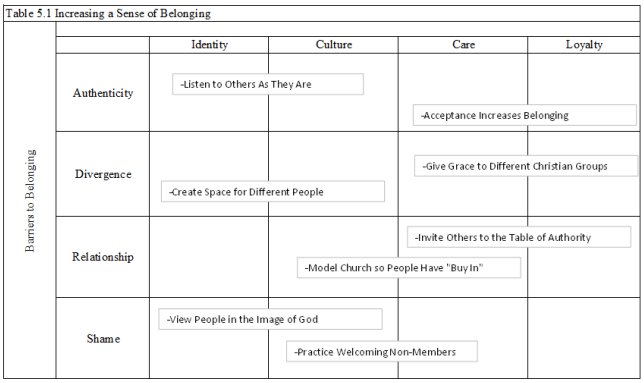
Identity, culture, care, and loyalty increase a sense of belonging the most when negotiating belonging. Care is an action of compassion or attention given to a person or situation. A caring action is sensitive to the nuances of interaction. Sometimes, an act as simple as listening to hear instead of listening to respond can reflect caring.

Loyalty is a commitment of connection or support. When someone experiences loyalty, they do not sense impending abandonment. Someone who is loyally part of a group does not need to fear being alone. Betrayal hurts so badly because we depend on one another to feel safe and secure. When someone experiences betrayal or fear of betrayal, they become lonely and anxious.

A good question in this framework would be, how do you feel cared for when you have a different opinion from the apparent majority? (Care and Divergence) Do you feel safe being vulnerable with members of our community? (Authenticity and Loyalty) This discussion aims to practically identify specific ways to build bridges between people, between groups, and with institutions. Practically, we should replace a barrier with a bridge.

Table 8

Increasing a Sense of Belonging



At this point, caution is prudent. Good people with good intentions have attempted to apply some of these concepts. However, there are second and third-order effects to building bridges where there was no barrier. There are also side effects to tearing down walls and not building bridges. Whenever an institution or group starts to tear down barriers, it must do so carefully because there will inevitably be side effects. The following five cautions should be considered in your work on belonging:

- An institution may alienate its previous members: Bridges are meant to connect people in different places and help them connect. If we remove a barrier and do not connect existing persons to this new reality, we alienate them and create division. This problem is a manic symptom of the church's handling of creation. It often feels like the western church is even more divided than the American political system. We hear about church splits as we hear about marital divorce.
- An institution may become hyper-tribal: In the pursuit of connecting with more people, some organizations may become intolerant of those who disagree. Simply, the tolerant becoming intolerant of the intolerant. In severe situations, dehumanized extremism may manifest as the worst case of hyper tribalism. When same-minded people begin to congregate, tribalism eventually turns into radicalism.
- An institution may cease to be an institution: Groups do require some level of social normalcy. That is why bounded sets and centered sets are the most common types of groups. If an institution does not have any social narrative, then it may cease to become an organization altogether.
- An institution may become ineffective: A institution may cease to be effective when tribalism creates tension. This tribalism often takes form in choice behavior, such as when a leader builds a team primarily based on the characteristic of diversity over the character of quality. During the rise of evangelical consumerism, this problem became prevalent when consumers began to choose "Christian" over quality. For example, when someone chooses

to listen to Christian music over listening to quality music, very little is Christian about the music other than the artist or Christian business affiliation.

- Lastly, an institution may lose its mission if an institution tears down all walls without building bridges. If a school removes all barriers of entry, it may increase enrollment and income, but then it may recruit missionally non-compatible students and staff. When a church becomes universal, the church ceases to be a seat of religion that helps bring relief to those in search of a spiritual need.

These are merely cautionary considerations. Humanity has a resilient way of picking up when things fall apart. If we fear that one of these things will happen to our organization, we have already capitulated to one of them. Instead, it is better to be on the lookout for these symptoms as we push into the barriers that impact our intuitions. We do not need more fear; we need more courage. We need courageous people to take on the mantle of leadership to bring relationship and belonging back to society.

In Chapter 1, I outlined the technical problem using Dr. Hiebert's bounded set and centered set. [15] I suggested that disparate orthodoxy would not allow for either a bounded or centered set. We live in a world where the reverent continue to build Jerusalem and where emerging western generations are increasingly exilic.

This data suggest that we need to take a step back from both building walls in Jerusalem and building bridges in exile. If we take a step back group from the A group and B group psychology, there is a third way. It is uncomfortable and full of tension. It requires dialog around authenticity, divergence, relationship, and shame. If these are the barriers to connection, we must

15. Hiebert, "Conversion, Culture and Cognitive Categories."

have a dialog on these topics. This will require a connection between warring tribes. If this dialog can occur, then we put ourselves into the same category, and we will begin to rehumanize one another. When we look at another person in the eye and practice empathetic love, we start to see commonalities that lead to belonging. No matter where we find ourselves, it is time to be with one another.

Building a Jerusalem culture and issuing behavioral indulgences is not at the heart of the Gospel because it dehumanizes. While there was a time and place for this in history, it is not now. We diminish the work of Jesus and the Holy Spirit when we build these types of institutions that are weaponized against the beautiful creation. Jesus railed against very similar and divided institutions.

This research doesn't indicate a need for abrupt reformation but, instead, a truer form reformation that resembles ongoing redemption. We want to experience the ongoing work of faith, grace, mercy, and love in the creation. Instead of throwing out the liturgy, tradition, or the church's beauty, perhaps we should embrace those very things with a different worldview. After all, if we genuinely believe that God is making all things new, then creation is moving and changing. That requires us, the church, to proceed with the Holy Spirit into a new worldview. NT Wright's aptly named text, *Surprised by Hope*, captures this warm feeling well. We have so much hope. We might even be surprised by the Divine hope when we focus on the new work that is here and is yet to come.

The solution to this spiritual crisis is long, hard work, but it is worth it because the alternative is even worse. The alternative is the loss of multiple generations that will never experience the love of God. We are in a transitional period of culture and the authority of the church. The church was charged with Christian spirituality and the hard work of redeeming

creation. Based on this research, the model that is currently being practiced doesn't meet the charge within a creation that is being redeemed.

The primary conclusion from this research is that church leadership should recognize the dissonance between a western exilic experience and current church modeling. The secondary conclusion from this research is that we need more dialog, grace, and relationship to prevent the loss of generations. Lastly, the third conclusion is that churches, institutions, and individuals will need to work together to bring healing to the spiritual crisis of belonging.

Further Questions for Study

This research was heavily sociological. Not because I wanted to avoid the denomination-based theological issues but rather because theology is sociological. In the way that our youth can no longer negotiate contradictions, theology cannot negotiate hypocrisy. Theology must be practical because God is the creator of our social experiences. This thesis is the beginning of a practical theology on belonging that has addressed how the church interacts with those called into communion with the Divine.

This conversation is a starter conversation. Additional topics for discussion include the theological, the practical, and the liturgical. Ultimately, we should take these barriers and ask the question, "How do we engage creation in concert with the Spirit's redemptive work?" Our context is this: The sun is setting on the western church's authority and is rising on the eastern church's sheer spirituality. As the sun sets on a 500-year church era, a new church is being redeemed into beautiful birth. Generations of leaders and servants are retiring with no replacements. Seminaries are producing less content and fewer workers than ever before. Now, these communities' leaders must recognize the context and consider our humble spiritual work as a part of a never-ending reformation.

1. We should attempt to identify denominational and branch-specific barriers to belonging.
2. We should attempt to quantify and qualify the current ongoing reformation (or redemption arc) work of the Holy Spirit to create a sense of unity rather than disparity.
3. We should attempt to develop effective seminary methods to train spiritual leaders and equip these leaders with bridge-building strategies to engage modernity's complex nature.

Conclusion

This research began by identifying a technical problem that resulted in a project intended to identify the barriers to belonging for emerging generations under 38 in a large western and metropolitan Christian community. In this research, I identified these barriers and compared them to a larger ecumenical community of emerging generations. Noting the similarities, I identified the four barriers as *authenticity, divergence, relationship,* and *shame*.

After identifying these common barriers, I noted that leaders in the church must recognize their place in the divine order and that a better church model involves intense relationship building. I suggested that this starts in the spiritual education process and discussed several models and their effectiveness based on this research. I also noted that excluded believers will continue to exist in the wilderness dependent on God's present love, much like Joseph.

On scripture and morality, I stated that scripture should be viewed hermetically and through the lens of a redemptive narrative. As such, the scriptures are not to be worshiped in the same way that God is worshiped. A violation of morality interrupts redemptive work but is not offensive to the church or to God because of the work of Jesus Christ. Lastly, I suggest a third

option that reflects neither exilic culture nor Jerusalem culture. Rather, I suggest that we work towards modeling spiritual communities that tear down barriers and builds bridges. We should not be fearful of the potential pitfalls on this journey. The world is full of fear. Now we need courageous people of hope.

All Christians yearn to find a place in the body of believers. We want to have relationships; we want to experience love and have peace. It is relationship, love, and peace that changes our lives and communities. This motivation drives us to emulate the beautiful image of the Divine. This project's ultimate purpose has been to experience God's love and help others do the same. In a world riddled with anxiety and loneliness, the church is being called to the lonely and the anxious. We can build beautiful bridges and tear down barriers. Brenè Brown wrote:

"Ideological bunkers protect us from everything except loneliness and disconnection." [16]

We need connection and a place to belong. We need these relationships. Let us remove our ideological bunkers for a time. Let the temple walls come down and let the curtain be torn in two. Let the love of Jesus Christ reign in our churches, in our communities, and in our relationships.

A Blessing for Belonging

May the mountains of God's love reign over your fears.
May the ocean of God's love wash away the searing pain of loss.
May the love of God's presence shine through the universe to heal all anxiety.
May God's overwhelming grace, severe mercy and deep love confirm that you are not alone.
Let the Divine love eradicate the very fear of love itself.
As Jesus willingly walked in weakness to death on the cross, walk into the experience of Divine love.
May you experience all the wonders of this Divine love.
Grace, peace, and love be with you. [17]

16. Brown, *Braving the Wilderness*, 59.
17. Walter Wilson, "A Blessing for Belonging," 2020.

APPENDIX A

SBL SCRIPTURE ABBREVIATIONS

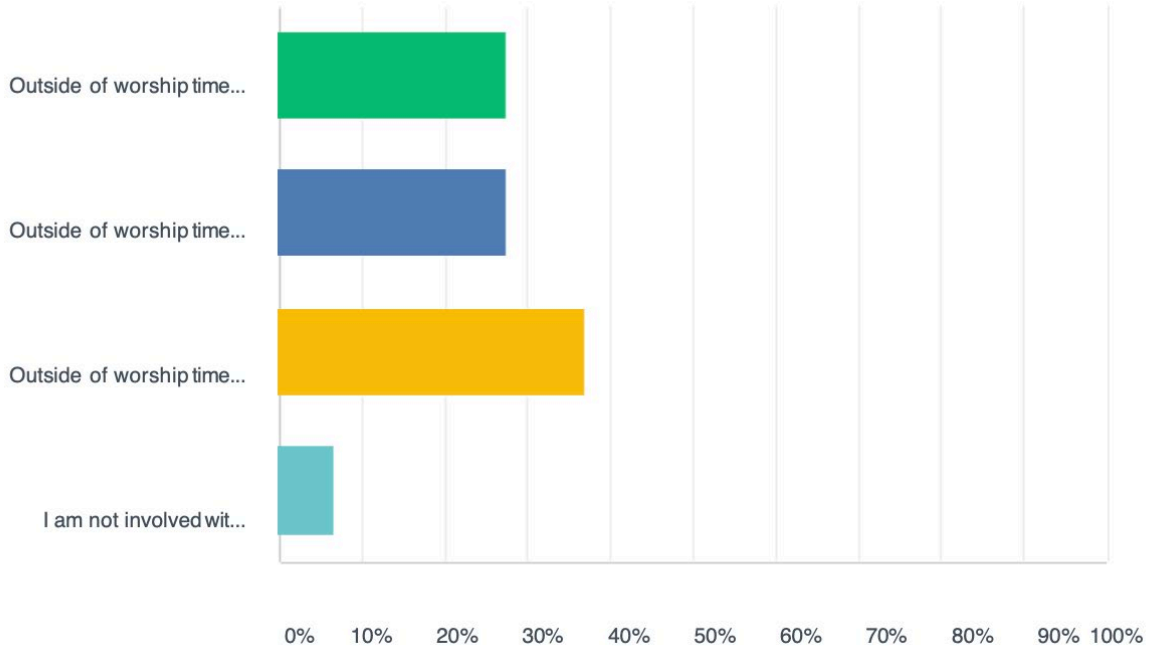
Old Testament		New Testament	
Gen	Genesis	Matt	Matthew
Exod	Exodus	Mark	Mark
Lev	Leviticus	Luke	Luke
Num	Numbers	Jonn	John
Deut	Deuteronomy	Acts	Acts
Josh	Joshua	Rom	Romans
Judg	Judges	1 Cor	1 Corinthians
Ruth	Ruth	2 Cor	2 Corinthians
1 Sam	1 Samuel	Gal	Galatians
2 Sam	2 Samuel	Eph	Ephesians
1 Kgs	1 Kings	Phil	Philippians
2Kgs	2 Kings	Col	Colossians
1 Chr	1 Chronicles	1 Thess	1 Thessalonians
2 Chr	2 Chronicles	2 Thess	2 Thessalonians
Ezra	Ezra	1 Tim	1 Timothy
Neh	Nehemiah	2 Tim	2 Timothy
Esth	Esther	Titus	Titus
Job	Job	Phlm	Philemon
Ps	Psalm/Psalms	Heb	Hebrews
Prov	Proverbs	Jas	James
Eccl	Ecclesiastes	1 Pet	1 Peter
Song	Song of Solomon/Songs	2 Pet	2 Peter
Isa	Isaiah	1 John	1 John
Jer	Jeremiah	2 John	2 John
Lam	Lamentations	3 John	3 John
Ezek	Ezekiel	Jude	Jude
Dan	Daniel	Rev	Revelation
Hos	Hosea		
Joel	Joel		
Amos	Amos		
Obad	Obadiah		
Jonah	Jonah		
Mic	Micah		
Nah	Nahum		
Hab	Habakkuk		
Zeph	Zephaniah		
Hag	Haggai		
Zech	Zechariah		
Mal	Malachi		

APPENDIX B

SURVEY DATA

SURVEY 1: LARGE METROPOLOTIAN NONDEMONIMATION CHURCH

Q1 How well do you feel that you belong to your faith community personally? Which of the following statements best describes your situation:



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Outside of worship time, I do not feel that I belong to my faith community.	27.91%	12
Outside of worship time, I somewhat feel that I belong to my faith community.	27.91%	12
Outside of worship time, I feel that I very much belong to my faith community.	37.21%	16
I am not involved with a faith community.	6.98%	3
TOTAL		**43**

Q2 If you didn’t answer that you feel like you ‘very much belong’ to your faith community then in no more than three words explain why:

Answered: 26 Skipped: 17

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Acquaintances not besties	4/24/2020 4:23 PM
2	feels fake, productionized	4/24/2020 8:15 AM
3	too busy	4/22/2020 11:13 AM
4	Lack of connection	4/21/2020 4:15 PM
5	NA	4/21/2020 3:50 PM
6	I no longer have a small group that meets on a consistent basis.	4/21/2020 8:49 AM
7	difficulty finding church	4/21/2020 8:18 AM
8	do others care	4/20/2020 9:41 PM
9	tough connecting	4/20/2020 8:22 PM
10	No longer Christian	4/20/2020 6:37 PM
11	Friends aren’t religious	4/20/2020 4:47 PM
12	Hard to connect	4/20/2020 3:23 PM
13	no social gatherings	4/20/2020 1:34 PM
14	N/a	4/20/2020 1:17 PM
15	missing connections	4/20/2020 12:54 PM
16	it's been hard to find a church since my theological views have radically changed	4/20/2020 12:49 PM
17	disconnected small group	4/20/2020 11:48 AM
18	I don't have people that I would consider friends in my faith community.	4/20/2020 10:52 AM
19	lack of time	4/20/2020 10:28 AM
20	I’m single woman	4/20/2020 10:07 AM
21	We are not still in contact, but I do have some friends from the group that I can reach out to!	4/20/2020 9:57 AM
22	Timing of Registration	4/20/2020 9:46 AM
23	These relationships are not my closest circle of friends	4/20/2020 9:40 AM
24	lack of involvement	4/20/2020 9:34 AM
25	People are flaky.	4/20/2020 9:34 AM
26	N/a	4/20/2020 9:25 AM

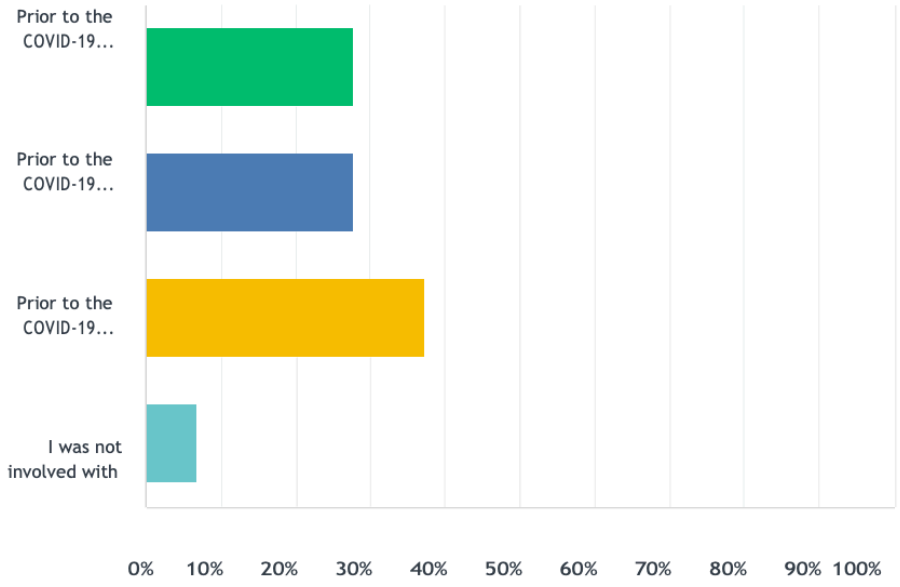
Q3 In no more than three words describe the most important factor to belonging to a faith community:

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	consistency and communication	5/7/2020 12:16 PM
2	Relatability	4/24/2020 4:23 PM
3	relationships, Bible application	4/24/2020 8:15 AM
4	Support, teaching, opportunity	4/23/2020 6:09 PM
5	feeling welcomed	4/22/2020 11:13 AM
6	Being known	4/21/2020 10:13 PM
7	Love, kindness, growth	4/21/2020 4:15 PM
8	Support, authenticity, accountability.	4/21/2020 3:50 PM
9	Consistently, accountability, fellowship	4/21/2020 8:49 AM
10	intelligent people	4/21/2020 8:18 AM
11	love your neighbor	4/20/2020 9:41 PM
12	genuine, connection, belonging	4/20/2020 8:22 PM
13	None	4/20/2020 6:37 PM
14	Friends with faith	4/20/2020 4:47 PM
15	Belonging	4/20/2020 3:23 PM
16	Inclusivity	4/20/2020 1:35 PM
17	community	4/20/2020 1:34 PM
18	Continue learning about my faith/ spiritual journey	4/20/2020 1:17 PM
19	physical presence	4/20/2020 12:54 PM
20	genuine, unforced unity	4/20/2020 12:49 PM
21	Opportunities for involvement	4/20/2020 12:34 PM
22	Becoming like jesus	4/20/2020 12:03 PM
23	bonded small groups	4/20/2020 11:48 AM
24	Vulnerability	4/20/2020 11:28 AM
25	acceptance and consistency	4/20/2020 11:26 AM
26	Mary	4/20/2020 11:17 AM
27	fellowship, holy spirit	4/20/2020 10:57 AM
28	Quality time	4/20/2020 10:52 AM
29	Acceptance, kindness, openness	4/20/2020 10:29 AM
30	judgment free space	4/20/2020 10:28 AM
31	Accessibility, inclusivity	4/20/2020 10:07 AM
32	inclusivity, warmth, acceptance	4/20/2020 10:01 AM
33	Support, growth, prayer	4/20/2020 9:57 AM
34	Association with like-minded people	4/20/2020 9:46 AM
35	Service, Engagement, Friendship	4/20/2020 9:44 AM
36	Trust, connection, exhortation	4/20/2020 9:42 AM
37	Feeling loved and heard	4/20/2020 9:40 AM
38	1-2 faith-based relationships outside of church on Sunday, obviously the more	4/20/2020 9:38 AM

	the better!	
39	trust and intentionalality	4/20/2020 9:34 AM
40	Consistency.	4/20/2020 9:34 AM
41	Acceptance, encouragement, and joy	4/20/2020 9:32 AM
42	Acceptance, similar beliefs	4/20/2020 9:27 AM
43	Truth grace accountability	4/20/2020 9:25 AM

Q4 Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, how well did you feel that you belonged to your faith community personally? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

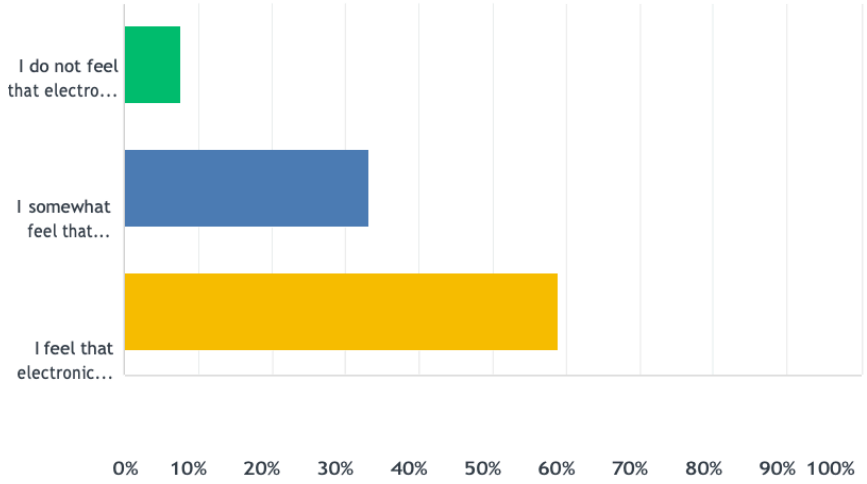
Answered: 43 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, outside of worship time, I did not feel that I belonged to my faith community.	27.91%	12
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, outside of worship time, I somewhat felt that I belonged to my faith community.	27.91%	12
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, outside of worship time, I felt that I very much belonged to my faith community.	37.21%	16
I was not involved with a faith community.	6.98%	3
TOTAL		**43**

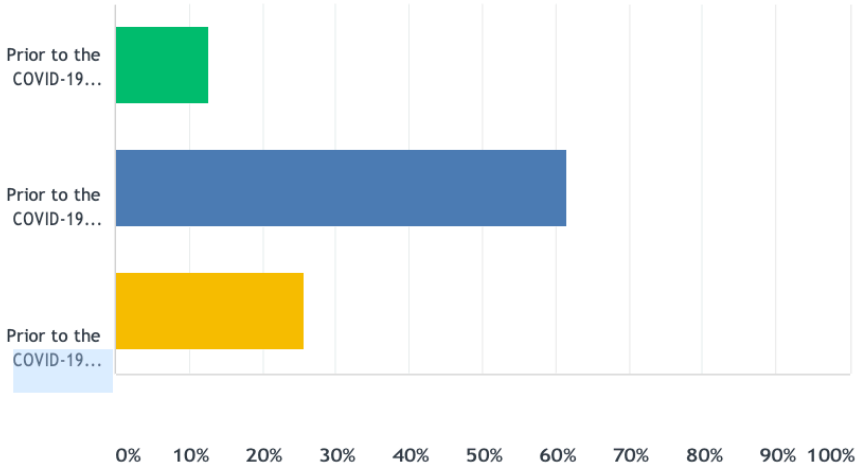
Q5 How important is an electronic medium or tool used in connecting personally with other people? Which of the following statements best describes your situation:

Answered: 39 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel that electronic tools help me connect personally with other people.	7.69%	3
I somewhat feel that electronic tools help me connect personally with other people.	33.33%	13
I feel that electronic tools are very helpful in connecting personally with other people.	58.97%	23
TOTAL		39

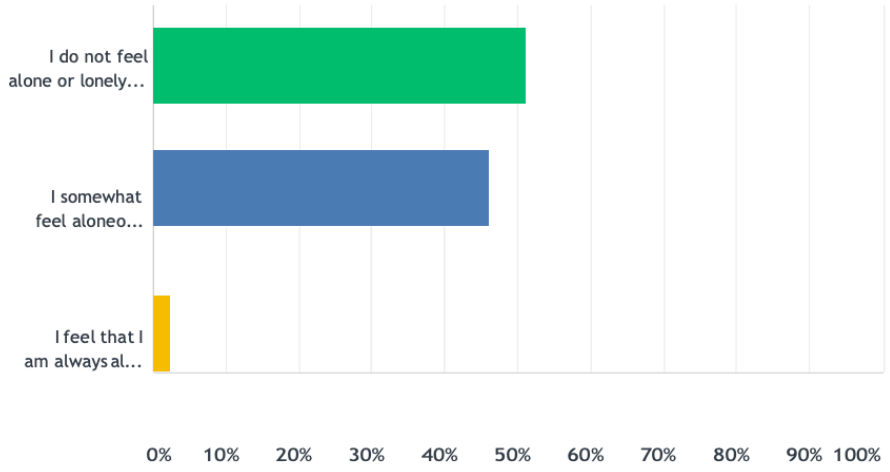
Q6 Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, how important was an electronic medium or tool used in connecting personally with other people? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I did not feel that electronic tools helped me connect personally with other people.	12.82%	5
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I somewhat felt that electronic tools helped me connect personally with other people.	61.54%	24
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I felt that electronic tools were very helpful in connecting personally with other people.	25.64%	10
TOTAL		39

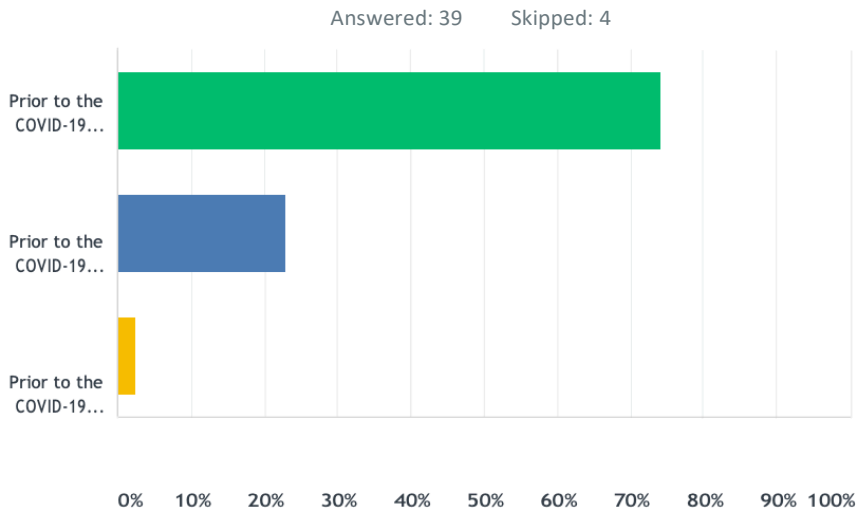
Q7 How often do you feel alone or lonely? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

Answered: 39 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel alone or lonely on a daily basis.	51.28%	20
I somewhat feel alone or lonely on a daily basis.	46.15%	18
I feel that I am always alone or lonely.	2.56%	1
TOTAL		39

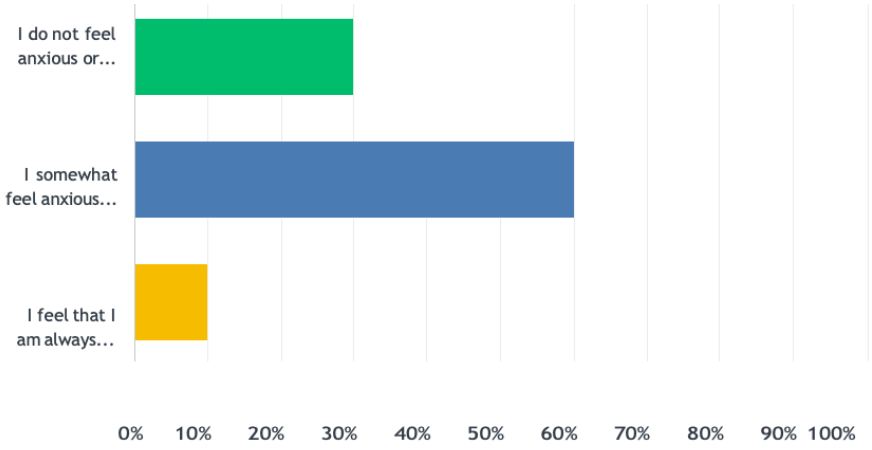
Q8 Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, how often did you feel alone or lonely? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I did not feel alone or lonely on a daily basis.	74.36%	29
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I somewhat felt alone or lonely on a daily basis.	23.08%	9
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I felt like I was always alone or lonely.	2.56%	1
TOTAL		39

Q9 How often do you feel anxious or anxiety? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

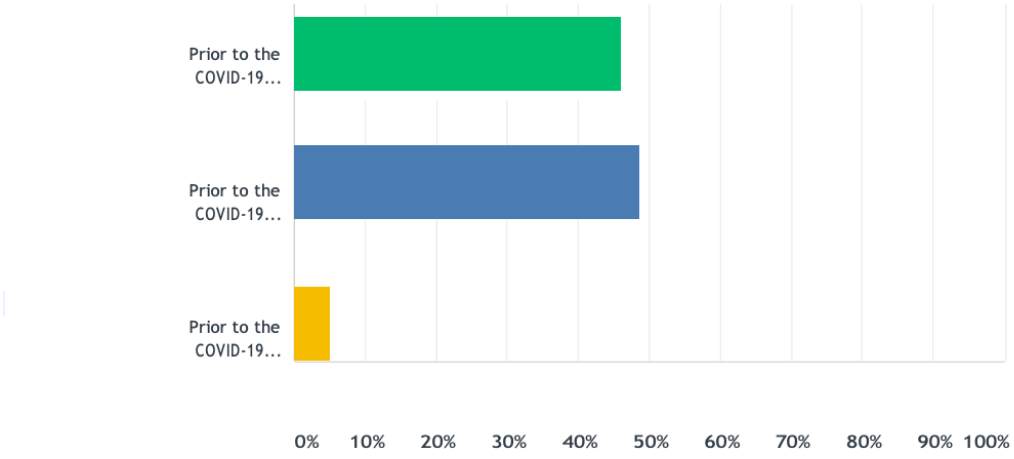
Answered: 39 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel anxious or anxiety on a daily basis.	30.77%	12
I somewhat feel anxious or anxiety on a daily basis.	58.97%	23
I feel that I am always anxious or have anxiety.	10.26%	4
TOTAL		39

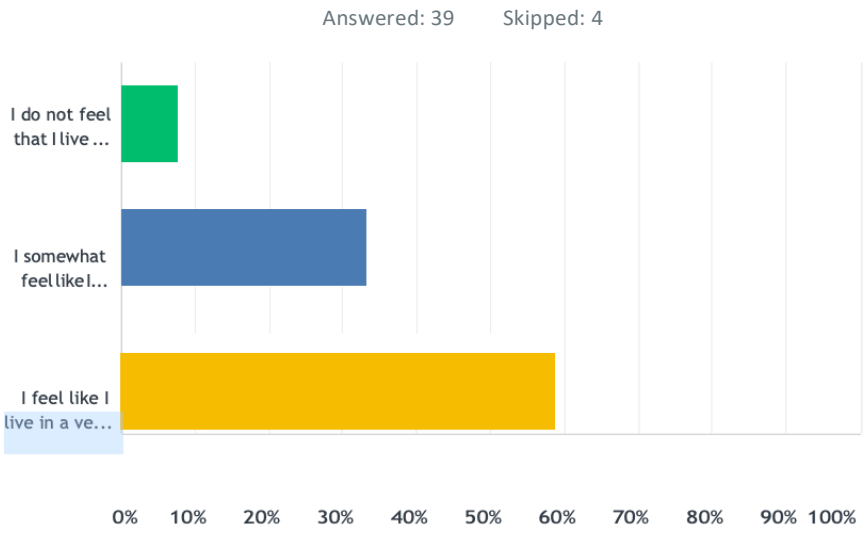
Q10 Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, how often did you feel anxious or anxiety? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

Answered: 39 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I did not feel anxious or anxiety on a daily basis.	46.15%	18
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I somewhat felt anxious or anxiety on a daily basis.	48.72%	19
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I felt like I was always anxious or experiencing anxiety.	5.13%	2
TOTAL		39

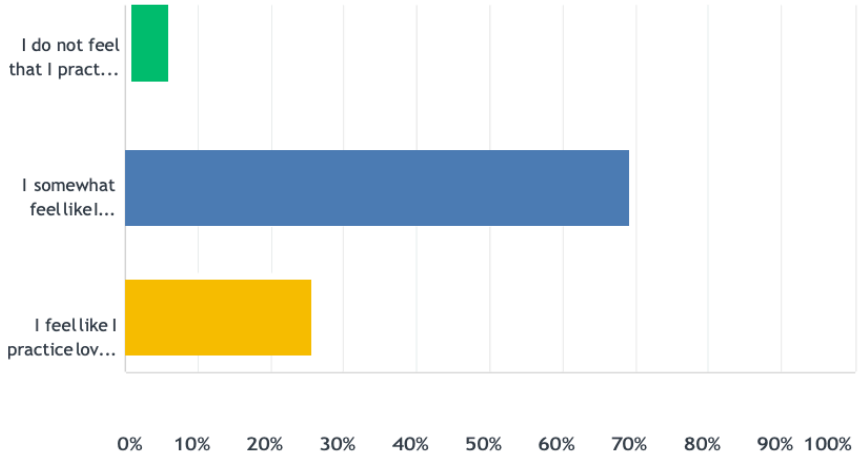
Q11 I live in a just and generous faith community. Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel that I live in a just and generous faith community.	7.69%	3
I somewhat feel like I live in a just and generous faith community.	33.33%	13
I feel like I live in a very just and generous faith community.	58.97%	23
TOTAL		39

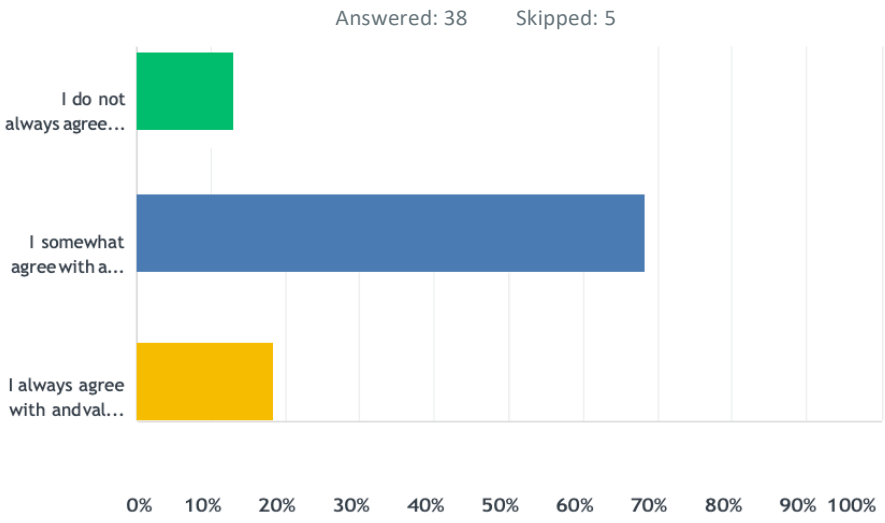
Q12 I practice love in the ways of Jesus. Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

Answered: 39 Skipped: 4



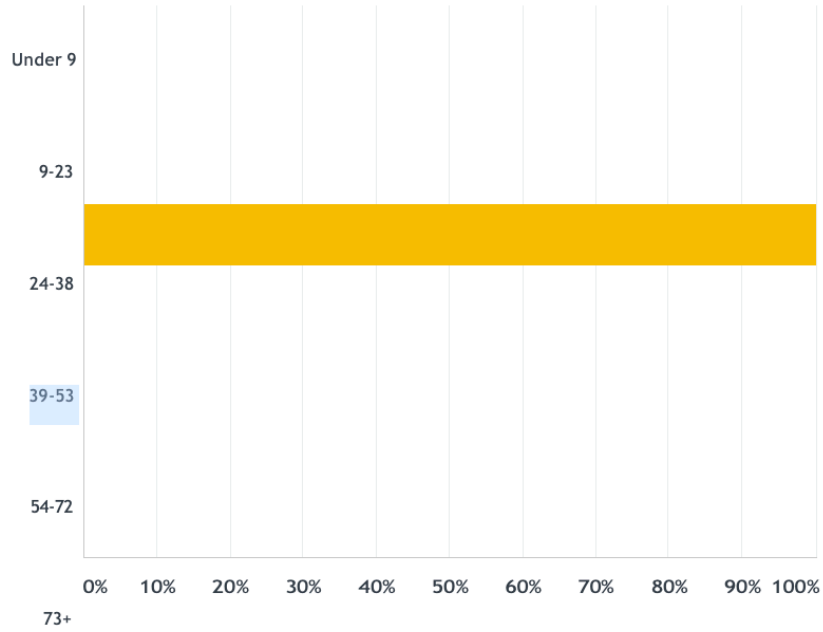
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel that I practice love in the ways of Jesus.	5.13%	2
I somewhat feel like I practice love in the ways of Jesus.	69.23%	27
I feel like I practice love in the ways of Jesus very well.	25.64%	10
TOTAL		39

Q13 I agree with and value faith community statements as a priority in my life. Which of the following best describes your situation?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not always agree with and value faith community statements as a priority in my life.	13.16%	5
I somewhat agree with and value faith community statements as a priority in my life.	68.42%	26
I always agree with and value faith community statements as a priority in my life.	18.42%	7
TOTAL		38

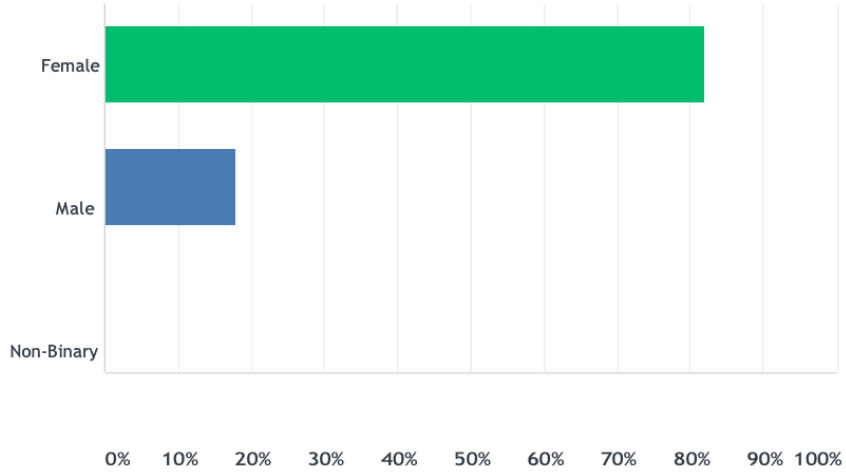
Q14 What is your age?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 9	0.00%	0
9-23	0.00%	0
24-38	100.00%	39
39-53	0.00%	0
54-72	0.00%	0
73+	0.00%	0
TOTAL		39

Q15 What is your gender?

Answered: 39 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Female	82.05%	32
Male	17.95%	7
Non-Binary	0.00%	0
TOTAL		39

Q16 What is your ethnicity? (Please select all that apply.)

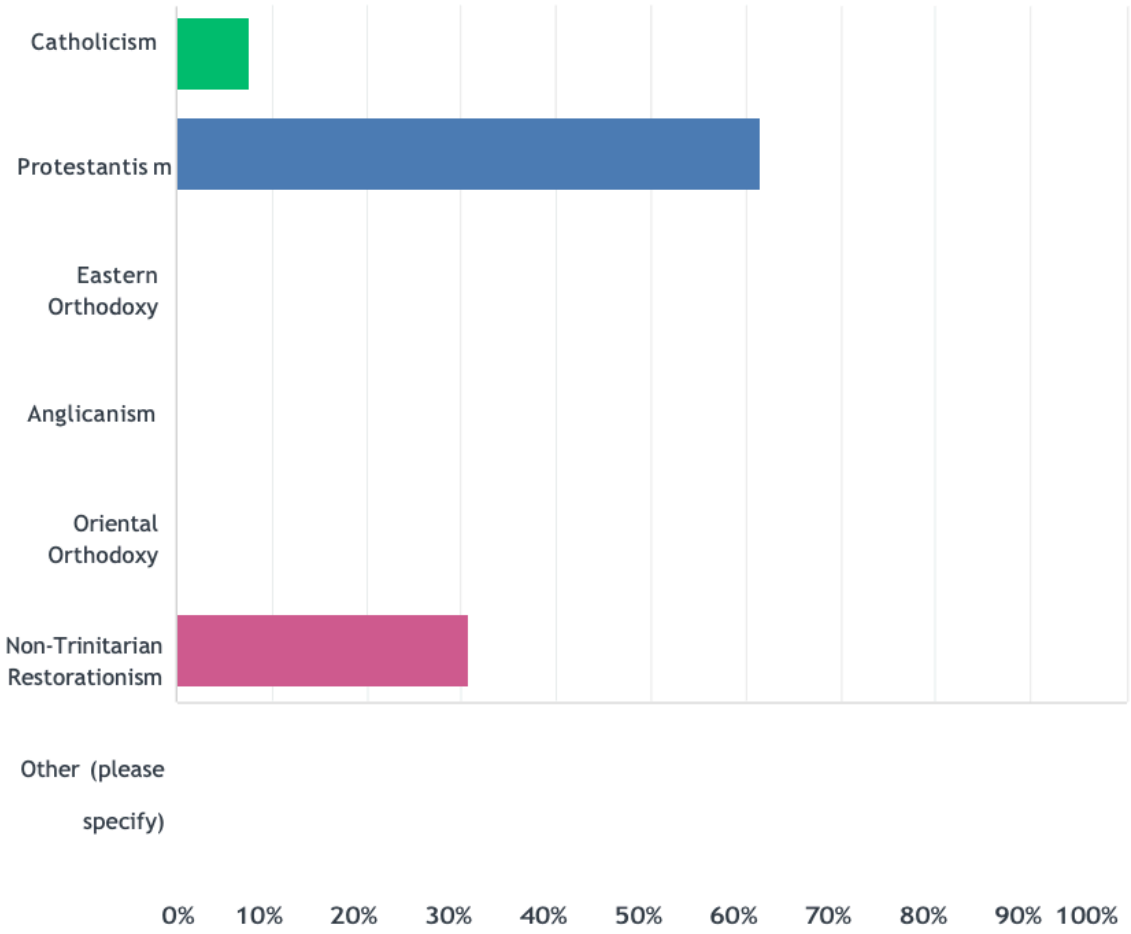
Answered: 39 Skipped: 4

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1.08%	1
Asian or Pacific Islander	18.28%	17
Black or African American	12.90%	12
Hispanic or Latino	23.66%	22
White / Caucasian	50.54%	47
Prefer not to answer	5.38%	5
Other (please specify)		0.00%
		0
Total Respondents: 93		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
	There are no responses.	

Q17 How would you describe your preferred faith tradition?

Answered: 39 Skipped: 4



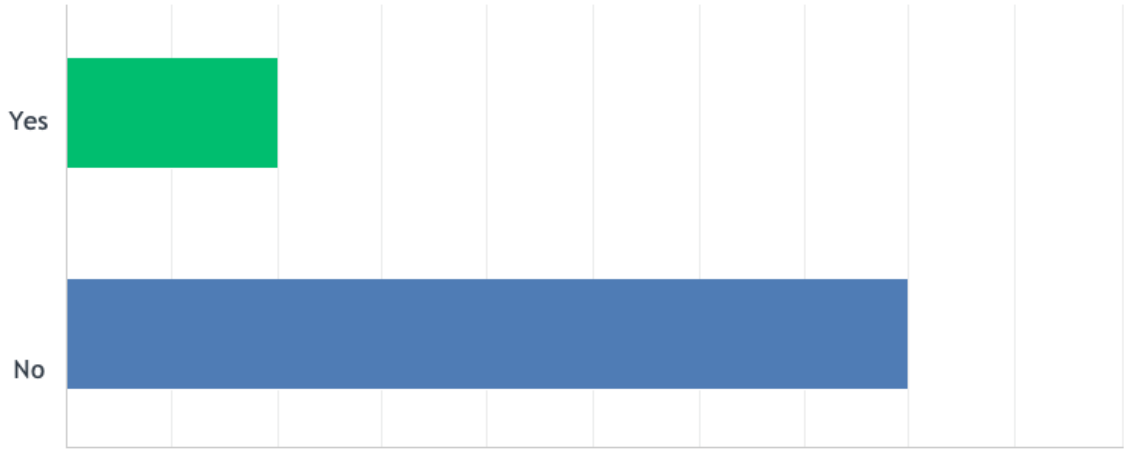
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Catholicism	7.69%	3
Protestantism	61.54%	24
Eastern Orthodoxy	0.00%	0
Anglicanism	0.00%	0
Oriental Orthodoxy	0.00%	0
Non-Trinitarian Restorationism	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	30.77%	12
TOTAL		39

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE

1	Non-denominational	4/22/2020 11:16 AM
2	Non-denominational Christian	4/21/2020 8:53 AM
3	Non-denominational	4/21/2020 8:20 AM
4	Christian	4/20/2020 3:25 PM
5	non-denominational	4/20/2020 11:31 AM
6	Christian	4/20/2020 10:59 AM
7	Non-denominational with catholic influences	4/20/2020 10:03 AM
8	Christian	4/20/2020 9:49 AM
9	Nondenom?	4/20/2020 9:46 AM
10	Christianity	4/20/2020 9:36 AM
11	Christian	4/20/2020 9:36 AM
12	Non-denominational Christian	4/20/2020 9:30 AM

Q18 Would you like to discuss this survey in further detail by participating in an interview?

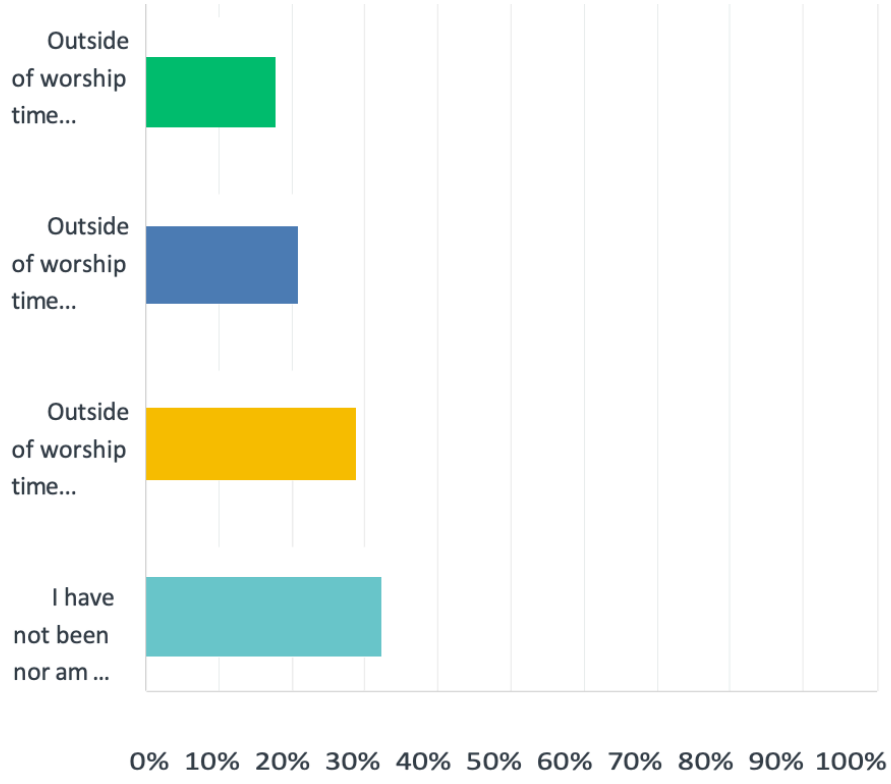
Answered: 39 Skipped: 4



SURVEY 2: DISPERATE EMERGING GENERATION SURVEY

Q1 How well do you feel that you belong to your faith community personally? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

Answered: 139 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Outside of worship time, I do not feel that I belong to my faith community.	17.99%	25
Outside of worship time, I somewhat feel that I belong to my faith community.	20.86%	29
Outside of worship time, I feel that I very much belong to my faith community.	28.78%	40
I have not been nor am not involved with a Christian faith community.	32.37%	45
TOTAL		139

Q2 If you didn't answer that you feel like you 'very much belong' to your faith community then in no more than three words explain why:

Answered: 64 Skipped: 75

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	I do not subscribe to all cultural sides of the faith	4/20/2020 3:35 PM
2	Not Applicable	4/20/2020 3:13 PM
3	Not Applicable	4/20/2020 3:01 PM
4	not enough involvement	4/20/2020 2:50 PM
5	Theres not very many of us around.	4/20/2020 2:38 PM
6	I've haven't been to church in a long time	4/20/2020 2:36 PM
7	Not very connected	4/20/2020 2:35 PM
8	No one cares	4/20/2020 2:34 PM
9	I don't have a church	4/20/2020 2:34 PM
10	Mixture of faith	4/20/2020 2:34 PM
11	Not Applicable	4/20/2020 2:32 PM
12	Not Applicable	4/20/2020 2:32 PM
13	Not involved much	4/20/2020 2:24 PM
14	Not Applicable	4/20/2020 2:14 PM
15	Don't really participate	4/20/2020 2:11 PM
16	I hate it	4/20/2020 2:06 PM
17	Not fully invested	4/20/2020 2:05 PM
18	n/a	4/20/2020 1:54 PM
19	Not Applicable	4/20/2020 1:51 PM
20	in my community	4/20/2020 1:49 PM
21	Not Applicable	4/20/2020 1:33 PM
22	Not Applicable	4/20/2020 1:31 PM
23	Questionable faith	4/20/2020 1:26 PM
24	Church seems like high school	4/20/2020 1:16 PM
25	My viewpoints changed as I got older	4/20/2020 1:04 PM
26	Long distance	4/20/2020 12:46 PM
27	judgmental people	4/20/2020 12:37 PM
28	not so sure	4/20/2020 12:17 PM
29	Good	4/20/2020 12:01 PM
30	No communication	4/20/2020 11:49 AM

31	Not Applicable	4/20/2020 11:48 AM
32	Disconnected from others	4/20/2020 11:33 AM
33	Most people are way older than me and at a different point in life	4/20/2020 11:31 AM
34	It rejects me because I'm gay.	4/20/2020 11:31 AM
35	n/a	4/20/2020 11:08 AM
36	i am not very involved with the community at church	4/20/2020 11:02 AM
37	Sometimes I feel too tired to attend church early Sunday morning	4/20/2020 11:01 AM
38	Not Applicable	4/20/2020 10:47 AM
39	I can't go	4/20/2020 10:44 AM
40	I do feel like I belong	4/20/2020 10:22 AM
41	Is good	4/20/2020 10:18 AM
42	Does not feel the same	4/20/2020 10:17 AM
43	No relationship	4/20/2020 10:08 AM
44	n/a	4/20/2020 9:59 AM
45	I'm not christian i just go to church for my friends	4/20/2020 9:31 AM
46	Not Applicable	4/20/2020 9:31 AM
47	Scared	4/20/2020 2:19 AM
48	Not Applicable	4/20/2020 2:16 AM
49	Independent opinions/feeling	4/20/2020 2:02 AM
50	I've faith	4/20/2020 1:58 AM
51	Not Applicable	4/20/2020 1:55 AM
52	Not Applicable	4/20/2020 1:03 AM
53	Don't attend often	4/20/2020 12:43 AM
54	Good stuff	4/19/2020 11:59 PM
55	Not relatable	4/19/2020 10:58 PM
56	Not Applicable	4/19/2020 10:58 PM
57	I try to participate in most aspects of the options they have for fellowship!	4/19/2020 10:55 PM
58	Am not appreciated	4/19/2020 10:55 PM
59	Work to much	4/19/2020 10:09 PM
60	No why	4/19/2020 10:05 PM
61	Not Applicable	4/19/2020 9:20 PM
62	i could do more	4/19/2020 9:12 PM
63	Not Applicable	4/19/2020 9:12 PM
64	i belong to it	4/19/2020 9:12 PM

Q3 In no more than three words describe the most important factor to belonging to a faith community:

Answered: 93 Skipped: 46

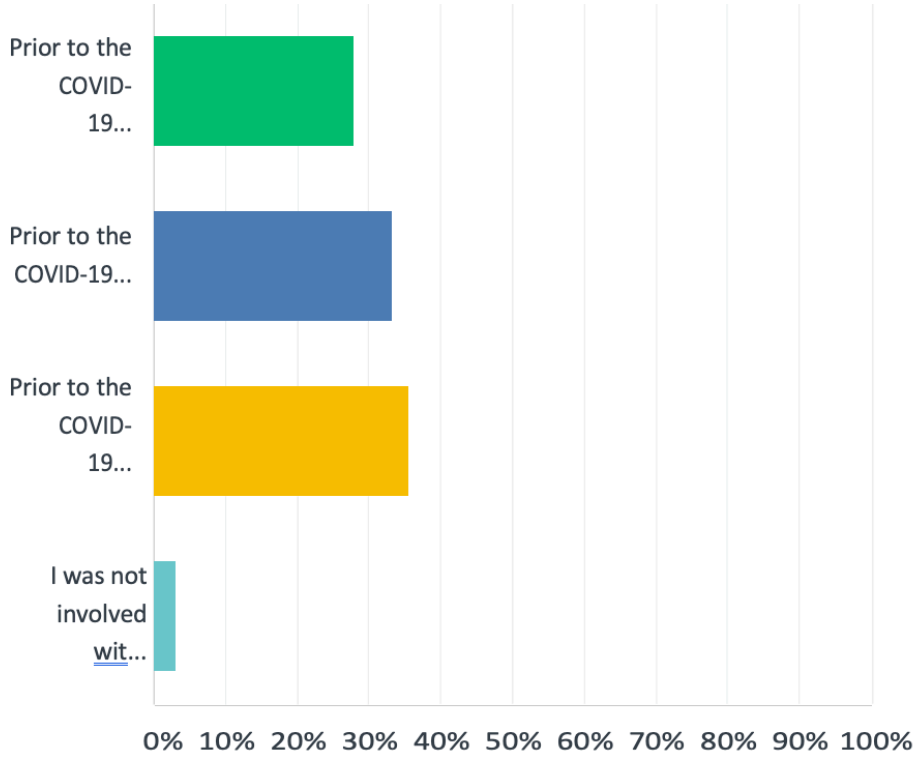
#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Love compassion care	4/20/2020 4:07 PM
2	Support	4/20/2020 4:05 PM
3	community	4/20/2020 3:58 PM
4	Faith in god	4/20/2020 3:35 PM
5	Not Applicable	4/20/2020 3:13 PM
6	Not Applicable	4/20/2020 3:01 PM
7	service, studying, gathering	4/20/2020 2:50 PM
8	Attitude	4/20/2020 2:38 PM
9	Having faith in God	4/20/2020 2:36 PM
10	Interconnectedness	4/20/2020 2:35 PM
11	No rapists	4/20/2020 2:34 PM
12	Community	4/20/2020 2:34 PM
13	Community support	4/20/2020 2:34 PM
14	Love and forgiveness	4/20/2020 2:32 PM
15	I don’t know	4/20/2020 2:32 PM
16	No judgment	4/20/2020 2:24 PM
17	Not Applicable	4/20/2020 2:14 PM
18	Trust	4/20/2020 2:12 PM
19	Distance and diversity	4/20/2020 2:11 PM
20	Free food	4/20/2020 2:06 PM
21	Being a community	4/20/2020 2:05 PM
22	Jesus Christ	4/20/2020 1:54 PM
23	Not Applicable	4/20/2020 1:51 PM
24	I belong here	4/20/2020 1:49 PM
25	experiencing Jesus	4/20/2020 1:33 PM
26	None it’s dumb	4/20/2020 1:31 PM
27	Acceptance	4/20/2020 1:26 PM
28	Not sure honestly	4/20/2020 1:16 PM
29	communicating with friends	4/20/2020 1:14 PM
30	Trust Community Honesty	4/20/2020 1:04 PM
31	they have kindness	4/20/2020 12:58 PM
32	Correct leadership	4/20/2020 12:46 PM
33	Community and acceptance	4/20/2020 12:37 PM
34	Religion impression hope	4/20/2020 12:34 PM

35	Not Applicable	4/20/2020 12:27 PM
36	not so sure	4/20/2020 12:17 PM
37	Constant reassurance	4/20/2020 12:09 PM
38	Faith in god	4/20/2020 12:01 PM
39	Good	4/20/2020 12:01 PM
40	friendship, support	4/20/2020 11:49 AM
41	Not Applicable	4/20/2020 11:48 AM
42	Belief, trust, honesty	4/20/2020 11:36 AM
43	Trust, companionship, and faith	4/20/2020 11:33 AM
44	Building my relationship with God	4/20/2020 11:31 AM
45	I don't like it. Too judgy.	4/20/2020 11:31 AM
46	Not Applicable	4/20/2020 11:16 AM
47	Faith	4/20/2020 11:16 AM
48	faith community support	4/20/2020 11:08 AM
49	belief in church	4/20/2020 11:02 AM
50	Keeping God close	4/20/2020 11:01 AM
51	Believing in it	4/20/2020 10:47 AM
52	Support	4/20/2020 10:44 AM
53	Drive	4/20/2020 10:31 AM
54	Believing in 1 god	4/20/2020 10:22 AM
55	No protection	4/20/2020 10:18 AM
56	Not Applicable	4/20/2020 10:17 AM
57	I'm not sure.	4/20/2020 10:13 AM
58	Relationship	4/20/2020 10:08 AM
59	Support	4/20/2020 10:03 AM
60	Hope and trust.	4/20/2020 9:59 AM
61	Belief, trust, dedication	4/20/2020 9:31 AM
62	Not Applicable	4/20/2020 9:31 AM
63	Worship	4/20/2020 9:16 AM
64	God family friends	4/20/2020 9:01 AM
65	Family	4/20/2020 4:56 AM
66	No god will save us	4/20/2020 2:19 AM
67	Not Applicable Hi	4/20/2020 2:16 AM
68	Cope with anxiety	4/20/2020 2:02 AM
69	Honesty	4/20/2020 1:58 AM
70	Spiritual growth	4/20/2020 1:55 AM
71	The vibes	4/20/2020 1:29 AM
72	It provides hope	4/20/2020 1:22 AM

73	Involvement, Togetherness, Communication	4/20/2020 1:19 AM
74	Believing in god	4/20/2020 1:03 AM
75	belief, trust, forgiveness	4/20/2020 12:44 AM
76	Being in attendance	4/20/2020 12:43 AM
77	trust honor faith	4/20/2020 12:21 AM
78	Cool stuff	4/19/2020 11:59 PM
79	love, peace, and unity	4/19/2020 11:06 PM
80	The teaching	4/19/2020 10:58 PM
81	Good quality food	4/19/2020 10:58 PM
82	Common values!	4/19/2020 10:55 PM
83	Feeling included in the community, having connections with people involved in the community.	4/19/2020 10:55 PM
84	Kindness and respect	4/19/2020 10:55 PM
85	Closeness	4/19/2020 10:26 PM
86	Keeping your faith	4/19/2020 10:09 PM
87	Feeling connected	4/19/2020 10:09 PM
88	Consistence, offering, pastor	4/19/2020 10:05 PM
89	Proud	4/19/2020 10:03 PM
90	it was great	4/19/2020 9:20 PM
91	togetherness	4/19/2020 9:12 PM
92	Welcoming, supportive, loved	4/19/2020 9:12 PM
93	it’s great to use it	4/19/2020 9:12 PM

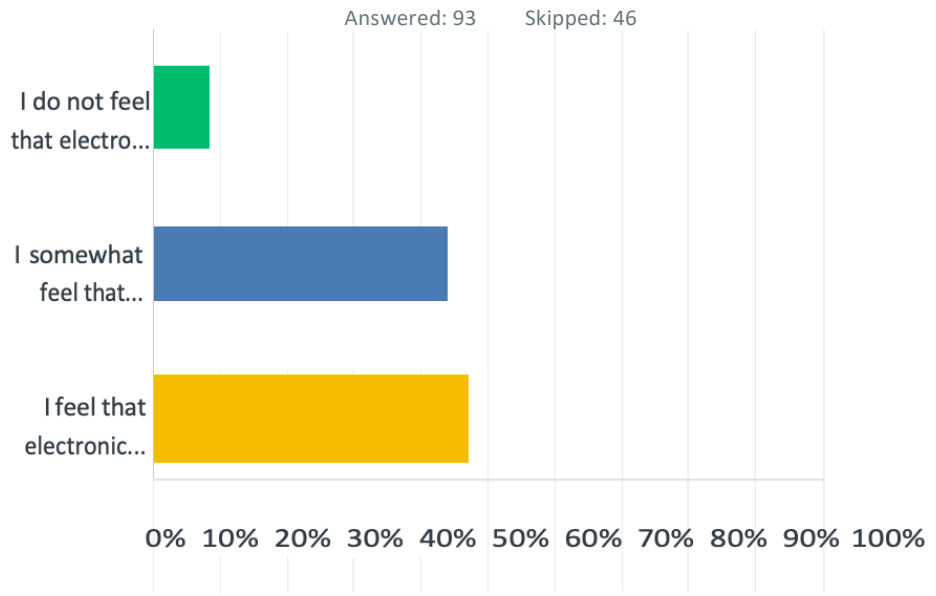
Q4 Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, how well did you feel that you belonged to your faith community personally? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

Answered: 93 Skipped: 46



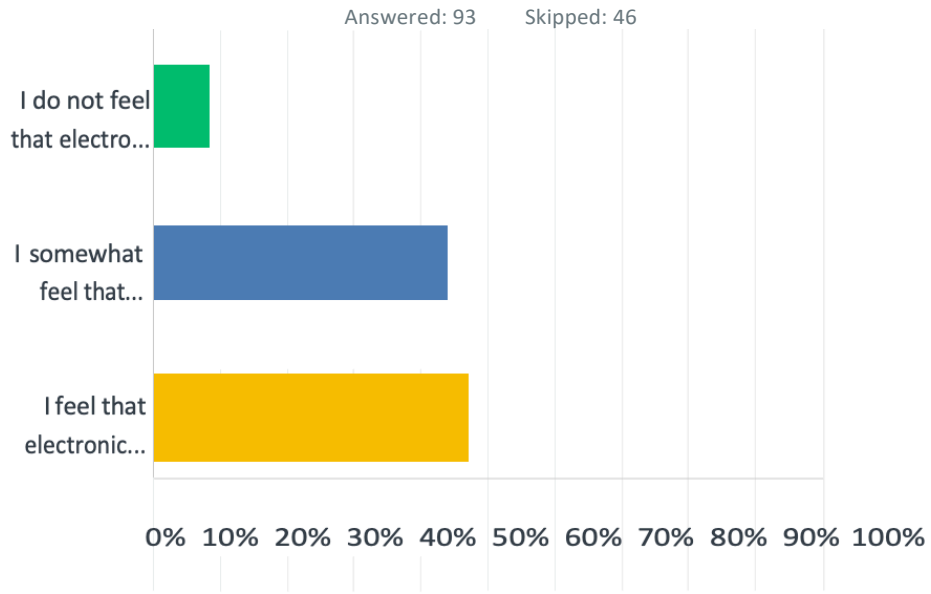
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, outside of worship time, I did not feel that I belonged to my faith community.	27.96%	26
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, outside of worship time, I somewhat felt that I belonged to my faith community.	33.33%	31
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, outside of worship time, I felt that I very much belonged to my faith community.	35.48%	33
I was not involved with a faith community.	3.23%	3
TOTAL		93

Q5 How important is an electronic medium or tool used in connecting personally with other people? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



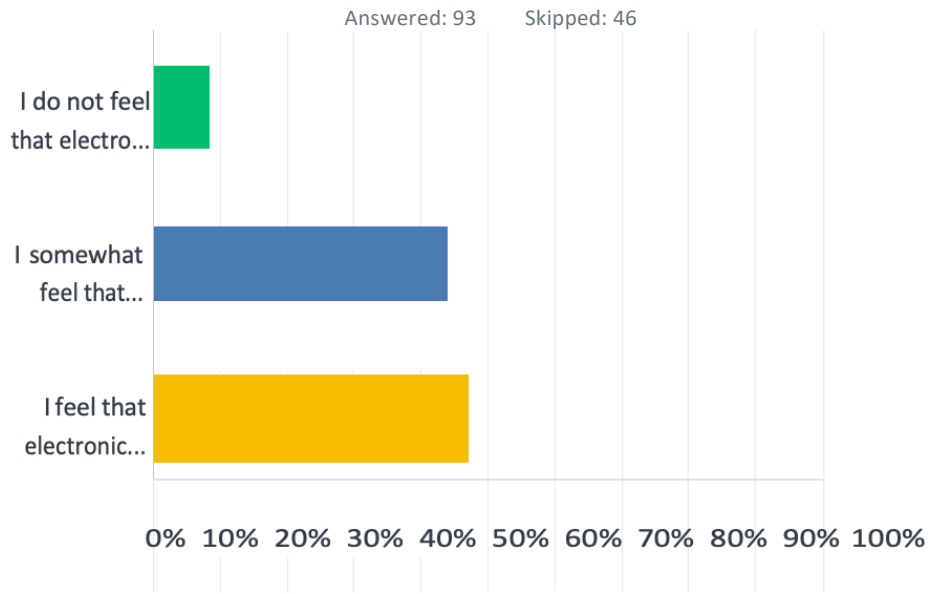
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel that electronic tools help me connect personally with other people.	8.60%	8
I somewhat feel that electronic tools help me connect personally with other people.	44.09%	41
I feel that electronic tools are very helpful in connecting personally with other people.	47.31%	44
TOTAL		93

Q6 Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, how important was an electronic medium or tool used in connecting personally with other people? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



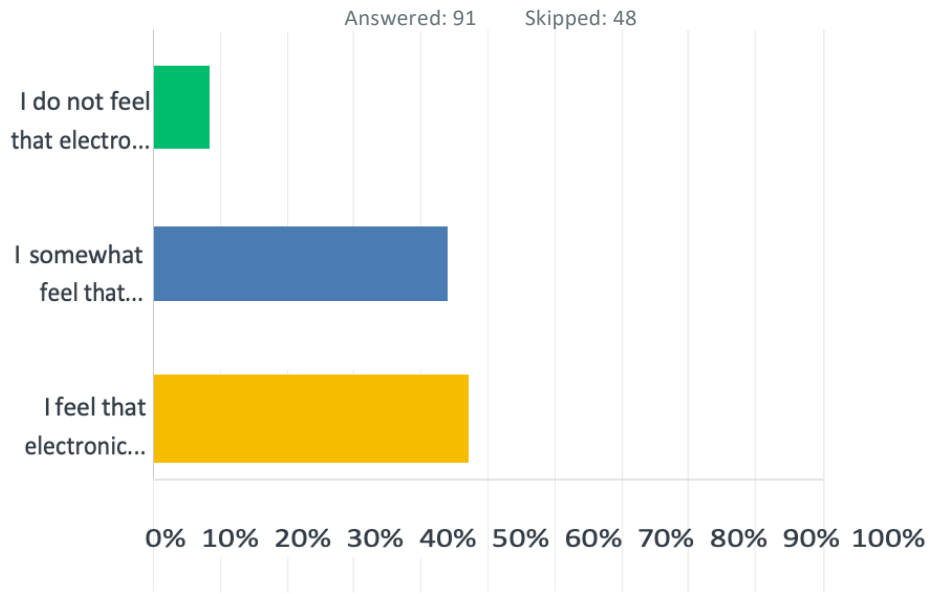
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel that electronic tools help me connect personally with other people.	8.60%	8
I somewhat feel that electronic tools help me connect personally with other people.	44.09%	41
I feel that electronic tools are very helpful in connecting personally with other people.	47.31%	44
TOTAL		93

Q7 How often do you feel alone or lonely? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



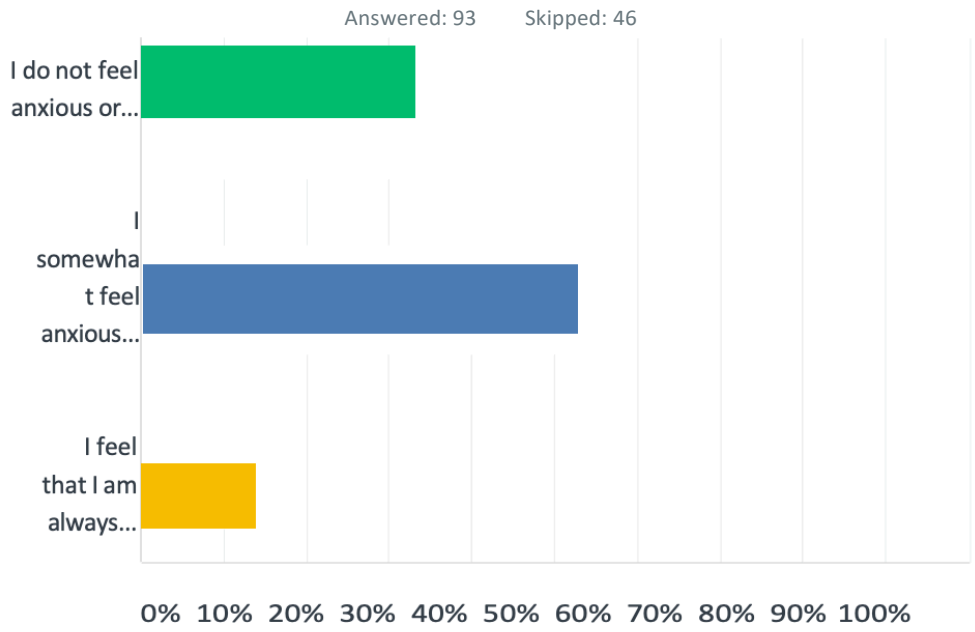
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel that electronic tools help me connect personally with other people.	8.60%	8
I somewhat feel that electronic tools help me connect personally with other people.	44.09%	41
I feel that electronic tools are very helpful in connecting personally with other people.	47.31%	44
TOTAL		93

Q8 Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, how often did you feel alone or lonely? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel that electronic tools help me connect personally with other people.	8.60%	8
I somewhat feel that electronic tools help me connect personally with other people.	44.09%	41
I feel that electronic tools are very helpful in connecting personally with other people.	47.31%	44
TOTAL		93

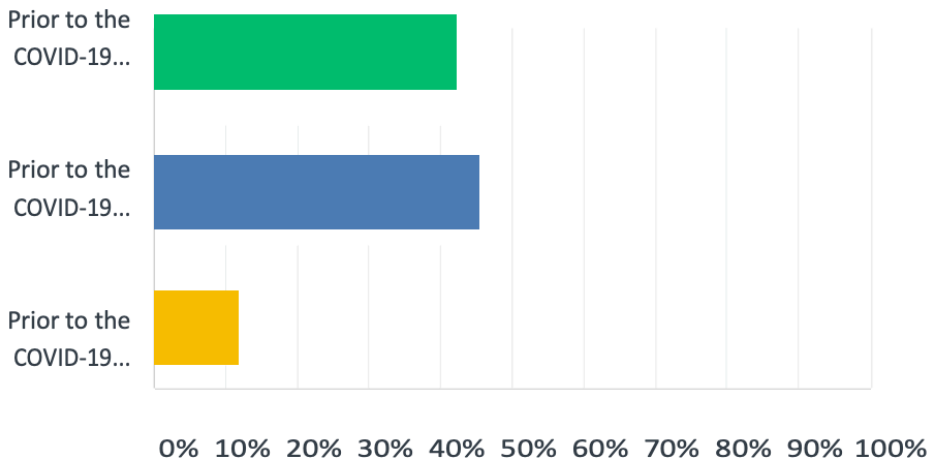
Q9 How often do you feel anxious or anxiety? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel anxious or anxiety on a daily basis.	33.33%	31
I somewhat feel anxious or anxiety on a daily basis.	52.69%	49
I feel that I am always anxious or have anxiety.	13.98%	13
TOTAL		93

Q10 Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, how often did you feel anxious or anxiety? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

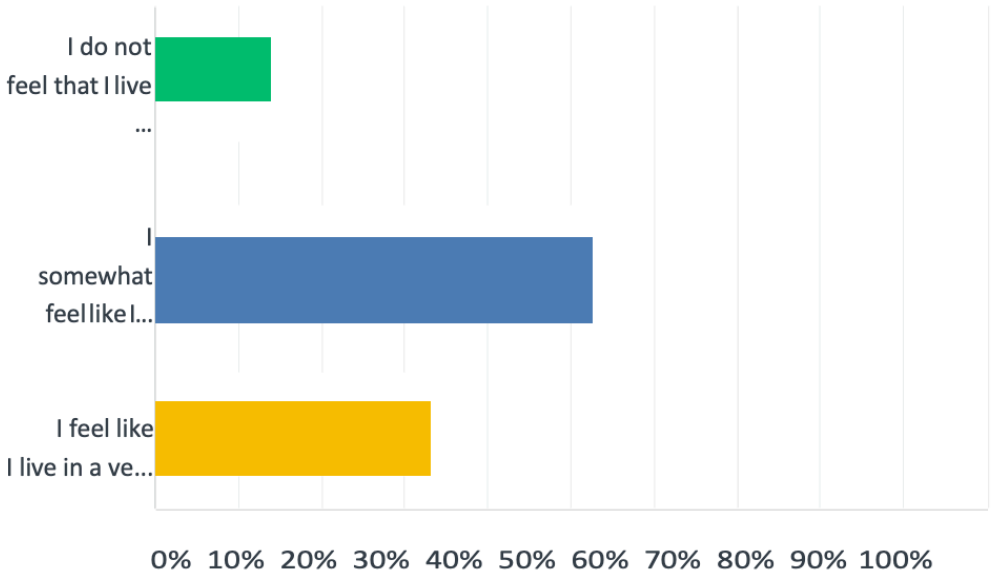
Answered: 92 Skipped: 47



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I did not feel anxious or anxiety on a daily basis.	42.39%	39
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I somewhat felt anxious or anxiety on a daily basis.	45.65%	42
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I felt like I was always anxious or experiencing anxiety.	11.96%	1
TOTAL		92

Q11 I live in a just and generous faith community. Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

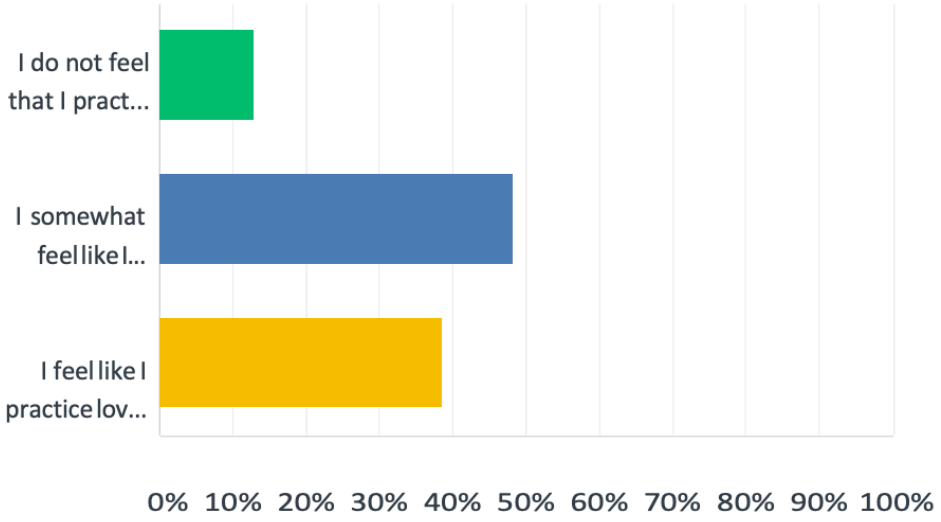
Answered: 93 Skipped: 46



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel that I live in a just and generous faith community.	13.98%	13
I somewhat feel like I live in a just and generous faith community.	52.69%	49
I feel like I live in a very just and generous faith community.	33.33%	31
TOTAL		93

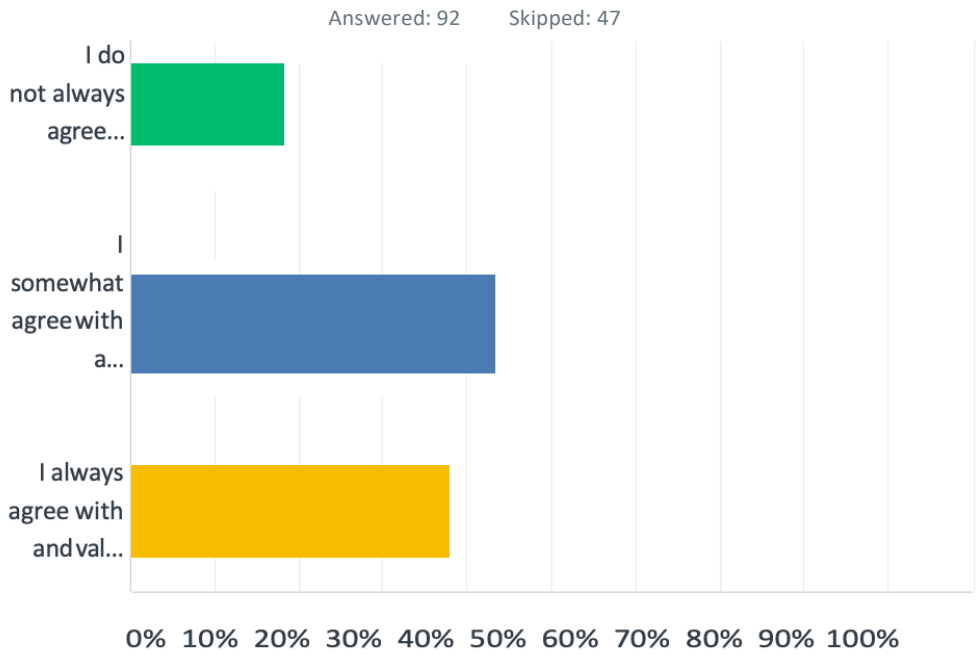
Q12 I practice love in the ways of Jesus. Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

Answered: 93 Skipped: 46



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel that I practice love in the ways of Jesus.	12.90%	12
I somewhat feel like I practice love in the ways of Jesus.	48.39%	45
I feel like I practice love in the ways of Jesus very well.	38.71%	36
TOTAL		93

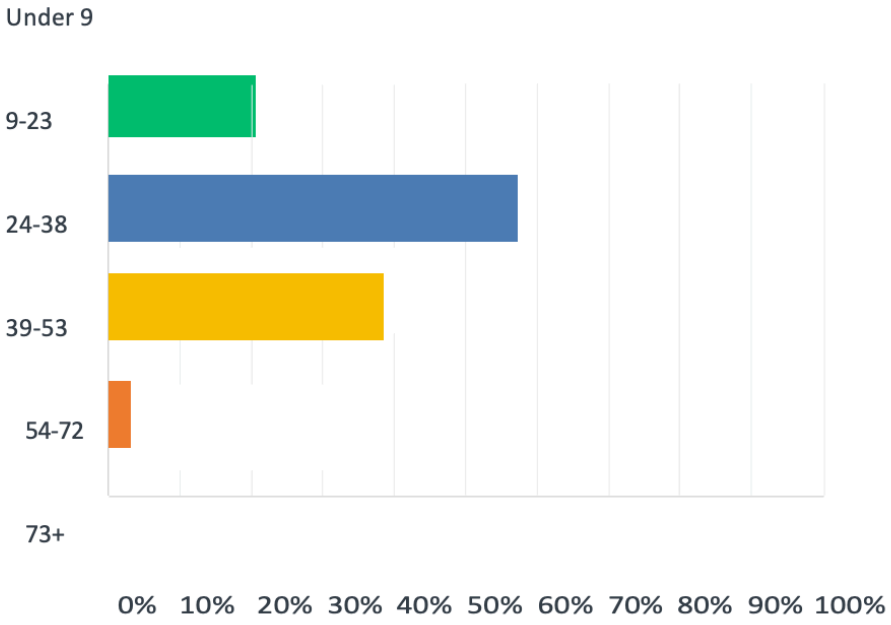
Q13 I agree with and value faith community statements as a priority in my life. Which of the following best describes your situation?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not always agree with and value faith community statements as a priority in my life.	18.48%	17
I somewhat agree with and value faith community statements as a priority in my life.	43.48%	40
I always agree with and value faith community statements as a priority in my life.	38.04%	53
TOTAL		92

Q14 What is your age?

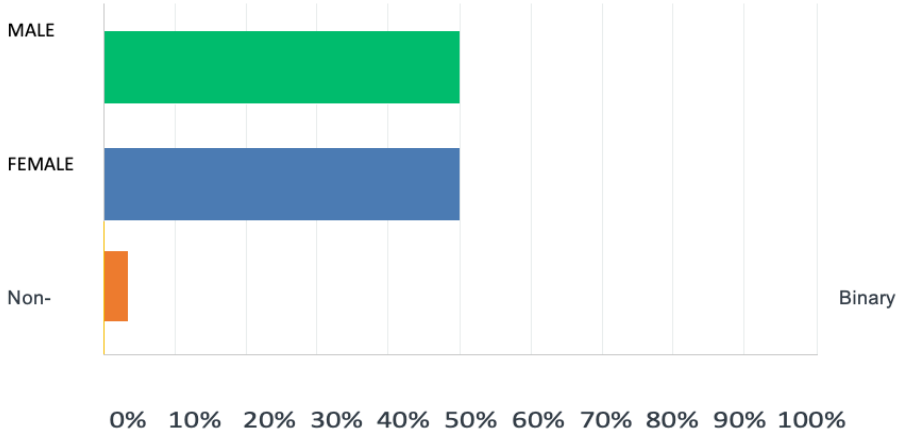
Answered: 93 Skipped: 46



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 9	0.00%	0
9-23	29.03%	27
24-38	58.06%	54
39-53	10.75%	10
54-72	1.08%	1
73+		
TOTAL		93

Q15 What is your gender?

Answered: 93 Skipped: 46



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Female	50.54%	47
Male	48.39%	45
Non-Binary	1.08%	1
TOTAL		93

Q16 What is your ethnicity? (Please select all that apply.)

Answered: 93 Skipped: 46

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1.08%	1
Asian or Pacific Islander	18.28%	17
Black or African American	12.90%	12
Hispanic or Latino	23.66%	22
White / Caucasian	50.54%	47
Prefer not to answer	5.38%	5
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 93		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
	There are no responses.	

Q17 How would you describe your preferred faith tradition?

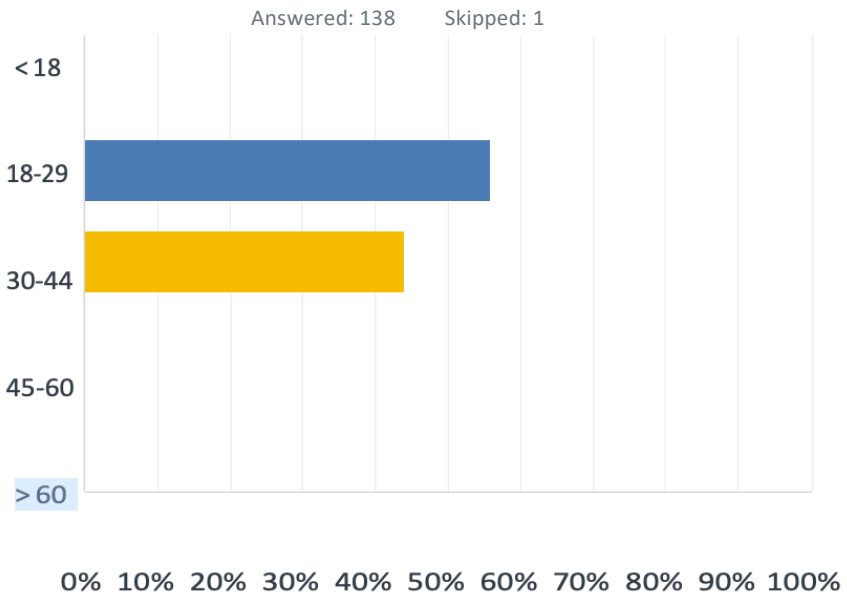
Answered: 93 Skipped: 46

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Catholicism	39.78%	37
Protestantism	16.13%	15
Eastern Orthodoxy	2.15%	2
Anglicanism	2.15%	2
Oriental Orthodoxy	2.15%	2
Non-Trinitarian Restorationism	4.30%	4
Other (please specify)	33.33%	31
TOTAL		93

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Christian	4/20/2020 4:05 PM
2	Latter Day Saint	4/20/2020 3:35 PM
3	Evangelical	4/20/2020 2:50 PM
4	Baptist	4/20/2020 2:36 PM
5	Non denominal Christian. Fully bible based.	4/20/2020 2:34 PM
6	Non-denominational	4/20/2020 2:24 PM
7	Christian	4/20/2020 2:12 PM
8	None	4/20/2020 2:06 PM
9	Why isn't Hindu on here	4/20/2020 1:31 PM
10	None just kindness	4/20/2020 1:16 PM
11	4 square	4/20/2020 1:14 PM
12	Lutheran	4/20/2020 12:46 PM
13	Mormon	4/20/2020 12:37 PM
14	Hindu	4/20/2020 12:17 PM
15	Christianity	4/20/2020 12:09 PM
16	Lutheran	4/20/2020 12:01 PM
17	evangélico	4/20/2020 11:16 AM
18	Catholicism with study of others	4/20/2020 10:44 AM
19	Christian	4/20/2020 10:17 AM
20	N/a	4/20/2020 10:13 AM

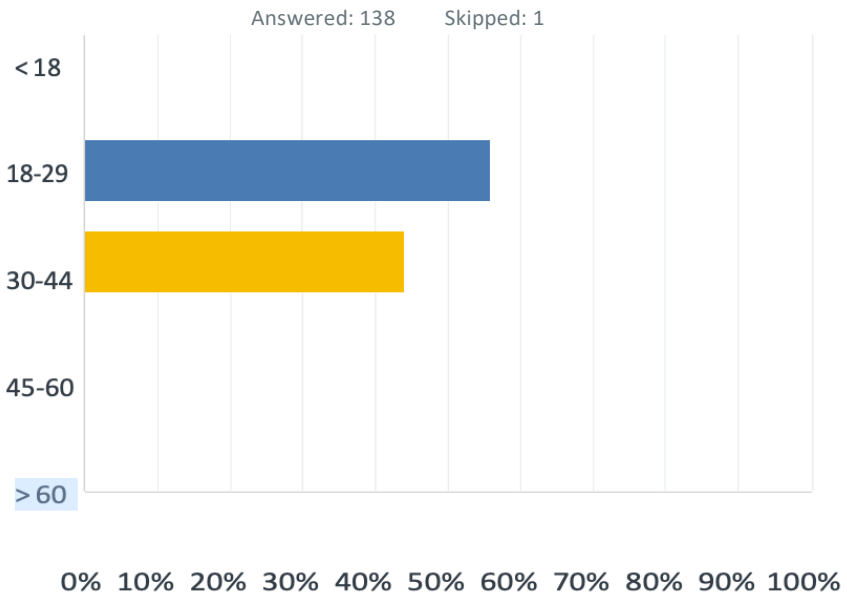
21	Christian	4/20/2020 10:11 AM
22	Agnostic	4/20/2020 9:31 AM
23	Baptist	4/20/2020 9:01 AM
24	God/Universe/Spiritual	4/20/2020 2:02 AM
25	Muslim	4/20/2020 1:58 AM
26	Christian	4/20/2020 1:19 AM
27	Christian Baptist	4/20/2020 12:46 AM
28	Christian non-denominational	4/20/2020 12:44 AM
29	Christian non-denominational	4/19/2020 10:58 PM
30	Prefer not to say	4/19/2020 10:55 PM
31	Non denomination	4/19/2020 10:03 PM

Q18 Age



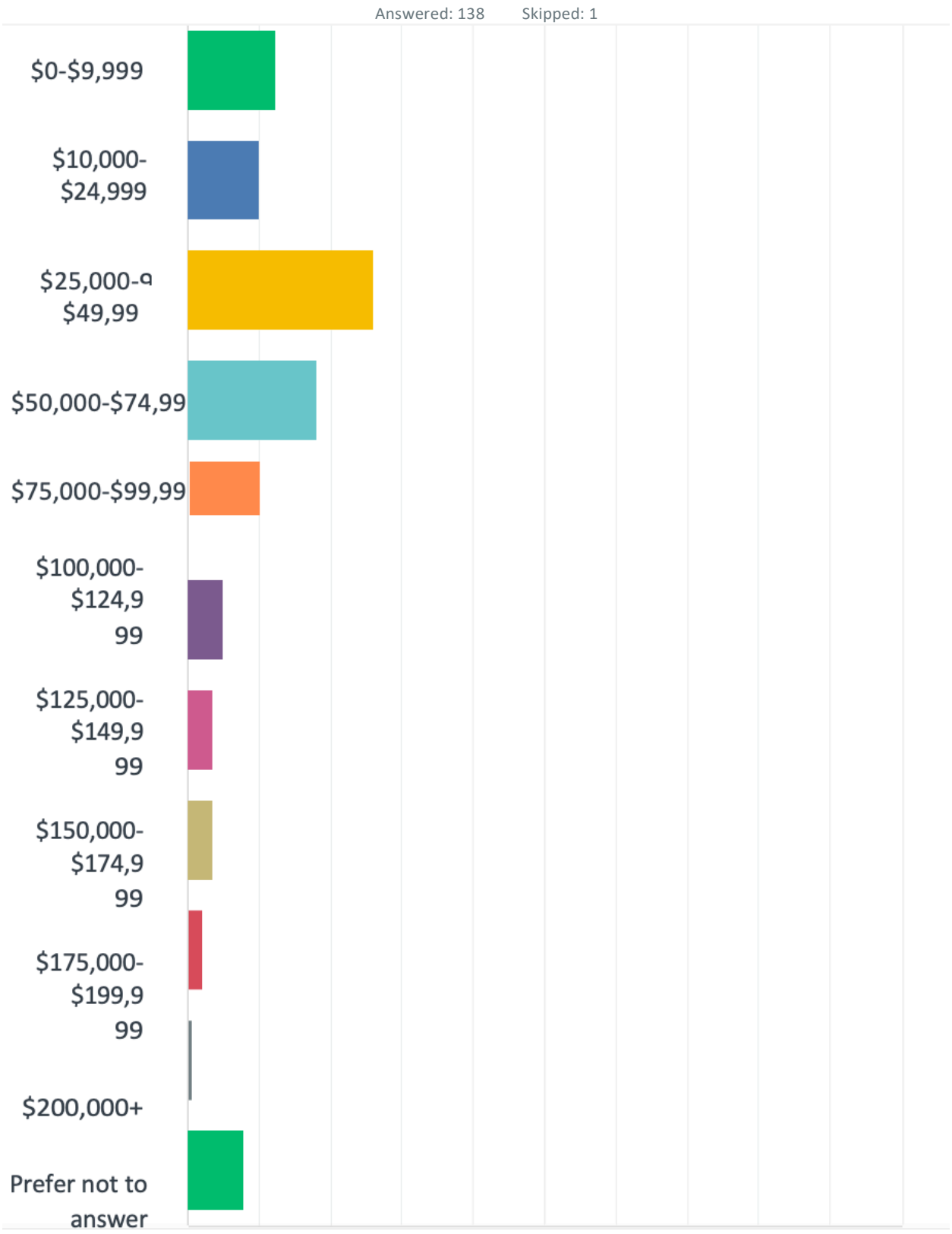
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
< 18	0.00%	0
18-29	55.80%	77
30-44	44.20%	61
45-60	0.00%	0
> 60		
TOTAL		138

Q19 Gender



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
< 18	0.00%	0
18-29	55.80%	77
30-44	44.20%	61
45-60	0.00%	0
> 60		
TOTAL		138

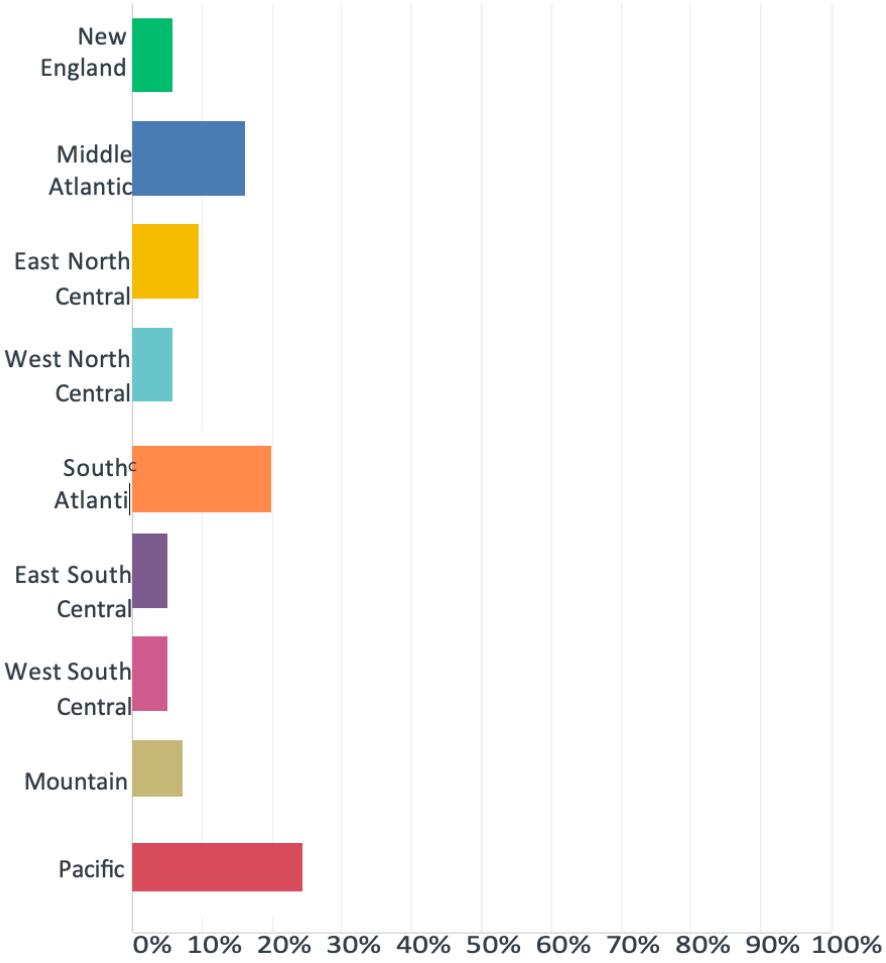
Q20 Household Income



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
$0-$9,999	12.32%	17
$10,000-$24,999	10.14%	14
$25,000-$49,999	26.09%	36
$50,000-$74,999	18.12%	25
$75,000-$99,999	10.14%	14
$100,000-$124,999	5.07%	7
$125,000-$149,999	3.62%	5
$150,000-$174,999	3.62%	5
$175,000-$199,999	2.17%	3
$200,000+	0.72%	1
Prefer not to answer	7.97%	11
TOTAL		138

Q21 Region

Answered: 135 Skipped: 4

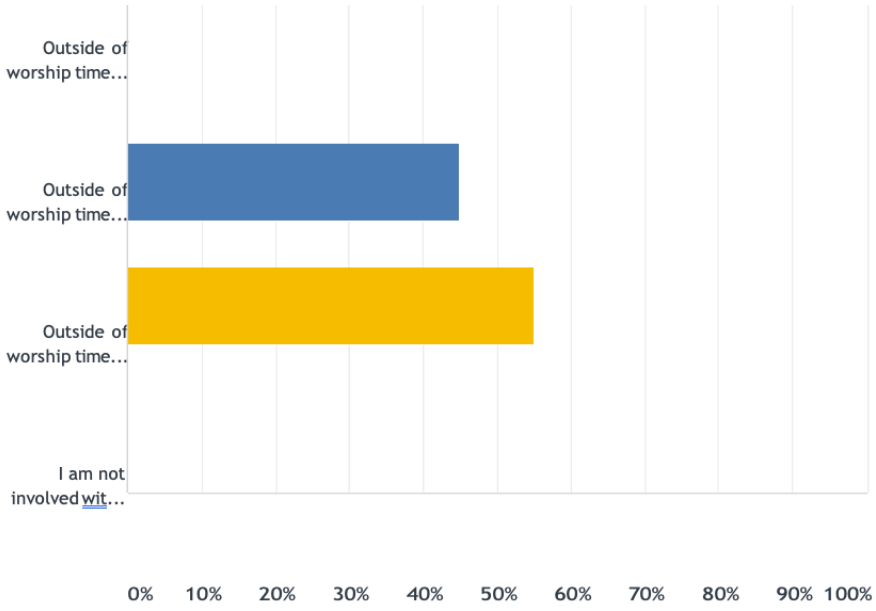


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
New England	5.93%	8
Middle Atlantic	16.30%	22
East North Central	9.63%	13
West North Central	5.93%	8
South Atlantic	20.00%	27
East South Central	5.19%	7
West South Central	5.19%	7
Mountain	7.41%	10
Pacific	24.44%	33
TOTAL		135

SURVEY 3: SMALL URBAN NONDEMONIMATION CHURCH

Q1 How well do you feel that you belong to your faith community personally? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Outside of worship time, I do not feel that I belong to my faith community.	0.00%	0
Outside of worship time, I somewhat feel that I belong to my faith community.	45.00%	9
Outside of worship time, I feel that I very much belong to my faith community.	55.00%	11
I am not involved with a faith community.	0.00%	0
TOTAL		20

Q2 If you didn't answer that you feel like you 'very much belong' to your faith community then in no more than three words explain why:

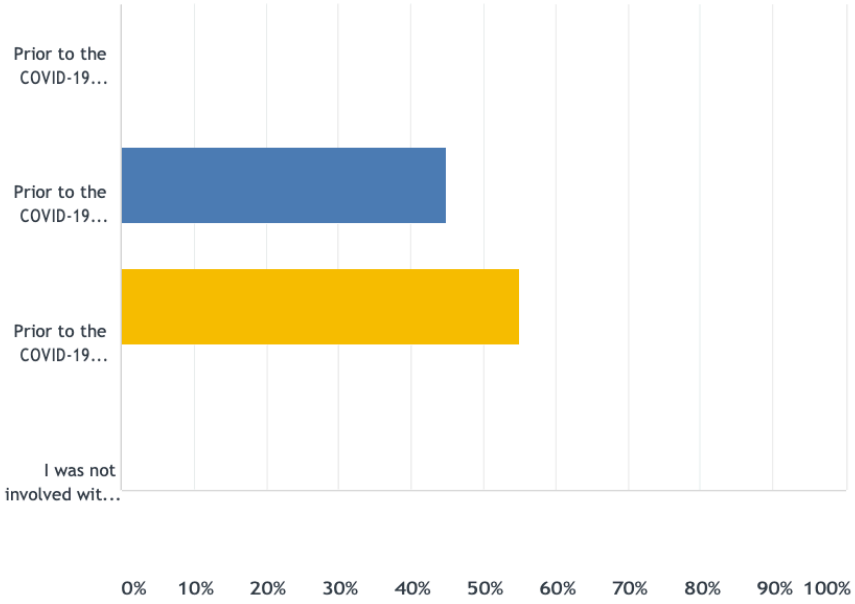
#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	support, honesty, care	5/7/2020 4:05 PM
2	distance, connection, community	5/6/2020 4:14 PM
3	I feel judged by other Christians (sometimes)	5/6/2020 2:50 PM
4	Distance, Time	5/6/2020 1:22 PM
5	Need to make it happen	5/6/2020 12:45 PM
6	N/A	5/6/2020 11:52 AM
7	Physical distance (spread across the city/state) makes friendships hard and belonging to a community seems to be mostly about developing friendships and close connections	5/6/2020 11:31 AM
8	Not a priority	5/6/2020 11:30 AM
9	I avoid involvement	5/6/2020 11:29 AM
10	Personal issues	5/6/2020 11:27 AM

Q3 In no more than three words describe the most important factor to belonging to a faith community:

Answered: 20 Skipped: 0

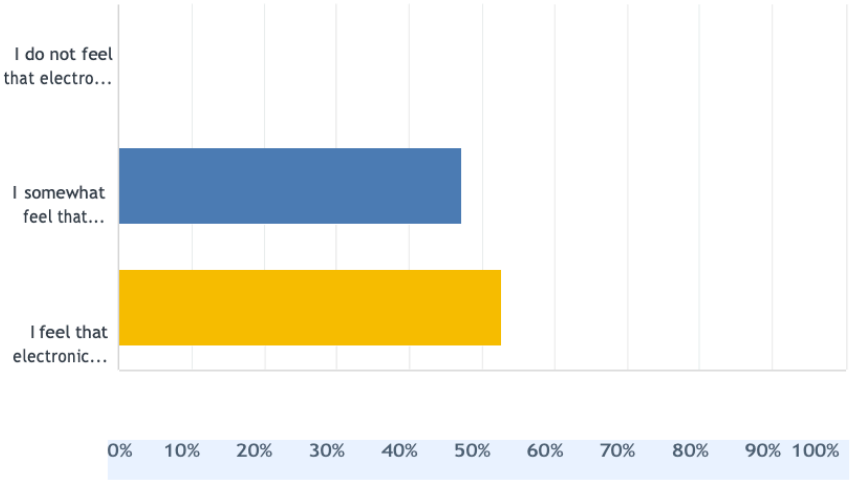
#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Building genuine human connections. The people really care about each other and want to provide a safe place for transparency.	5/7/2020 4:05 PM
2	love one-another	5/6/2020 7:10 PM
3	cultivating meaningful relationships	5/6/2020 5:25 PM
4	shared directional pursuit	5/6/2020 4:14 PM
5	Community and accountability	5/6/2020 2:50 PM
6	Honest discussions outside of Sunday mornings, accountability as well	5/6/2020 2:36 PM
7	Authenticity & being known	5/6/2020 1:50 PM
8	Jesus, love, accountability	5/6/2020 1:22 PM
9	Consistency and shared vision	5/6/2020 1:01 PM
10	Connection, fellowship, support	5/6/2020 12:45 PM
11	Fellowship, community, friendships	5/6/2020 11:54 AM
12	Growth through fellowship	5/6/2020 11:52 AM
13	Relationships	5/6/2020 11:31 AM
14	Shared vision	5/6/2020 11:30 AM
15	Shared beliefs	5/6/2020 11:29 AM
16	Support system	5/6/2020 11:27 AM
17	authenticity, relationship	4/30/2020 2:18 PM
18	Reinforcement, Knowing there's support	4/30/2020 2:18 PM
19	Sharing ups and downs in life together	4/30/2020 1:57 PM
20	Relationship, Consistency, Support	4/30/2020 1:52 PM

Q4 Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, how well did you feel that you belonged to your faith community personally? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



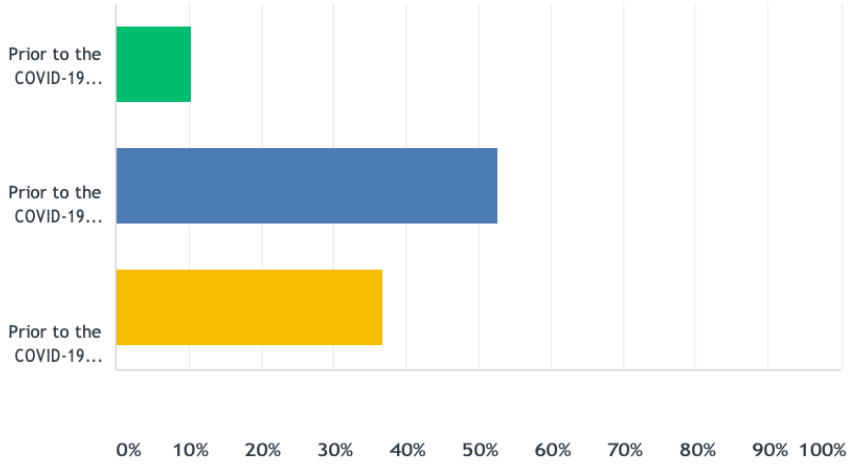
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, outside of worship time, I did not feel that I belonged to my faith community.	0.00%	0
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, outside of worship time, I somewhat felt that I belonged to my faith community.	45.00%	9
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, outside of worship time, I felt that I very much belonged to my faith community.	55.00%	11
I was not involved with a faith community.	0.00%	0
TOTAL		20

Q5 How important is an electronic medium or tool used in connecting personally with other people? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel that electronic tools help me connect personally with other people.	0.00%	0
I somewhat feel that electronic tools help me connect personally with other people.	47.37%	9
I feel that electronic tools are very helpful in connecting personally with other people.	52.63%	10
TOTAL		19

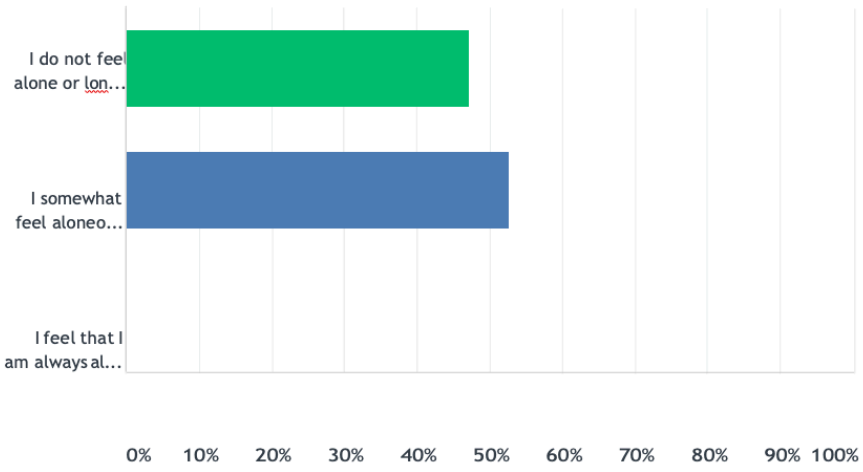
Q6 Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, how important was an electronic medium or tool used in connecting personally with other people? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I did not feel that electronic tools helped me connect personally with other people.	10.53%	2
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I somewhat felt that electronic tools helped me connect personally with other people.	52.63%	10
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I felt that electronic tools were very helpful in connecting personally with other people.	36.84%	7
TOTAL		19

Q7 How often do you feel alone or lonely? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

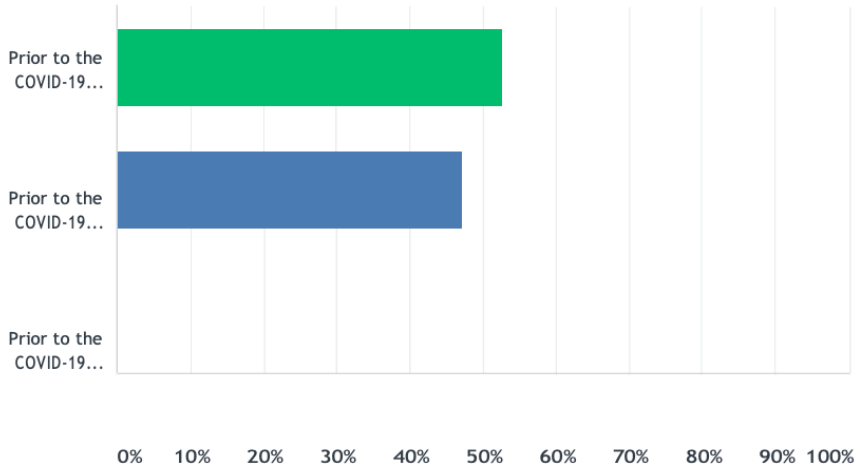
Answered: 19 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel alone or lonely on a daily basis.	47.37%	9
I somewhat feel alone or lonely on a daily basis.	52.63%	10
I feel that I am always alone or lonely.	0.00%	0
TOTAL		19

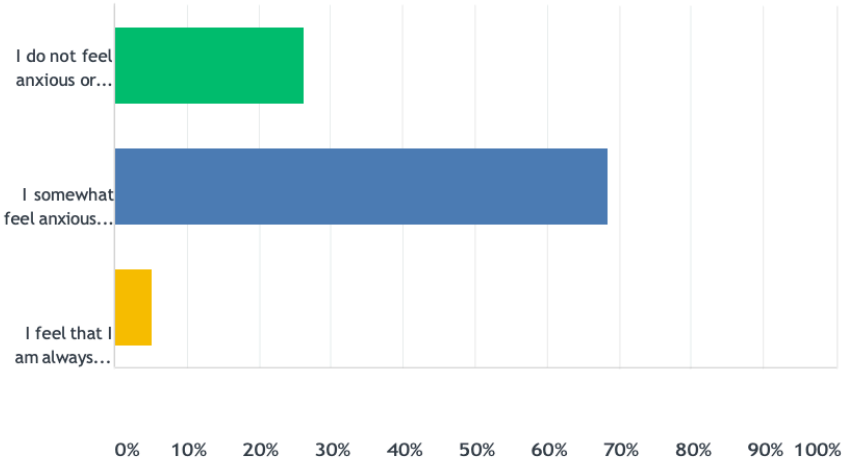
Q8 Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, how often did you feel alone or lonely? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I did not feel alone or lonely on a daily basis.	52.63%	10
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I somewhat felt alone or lonely on a daily basis.	47.37%	9
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I felt like I was always alone or lonely.	0.00%	0
TOTAL		19

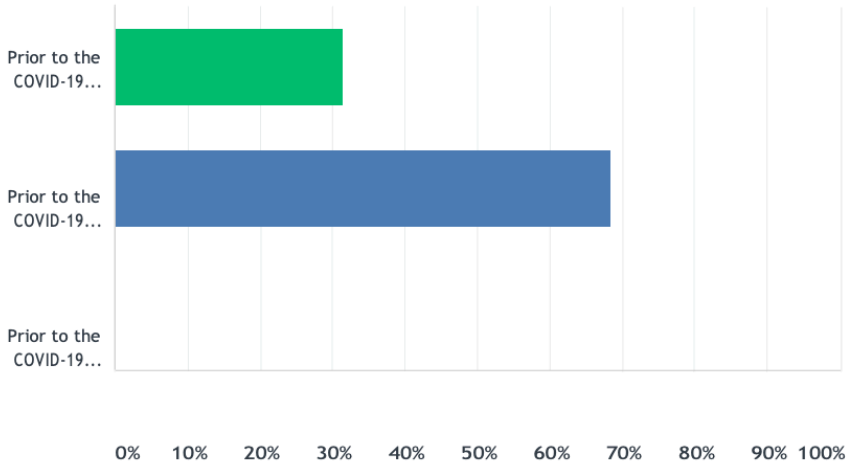
Q9 How often do you feel anxious or anxiety? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel anxious or anxiety on a daily basis.	26.32%	5
I somewhat feel anxious or anxiety on a daily basis.	68.42%	13
I feel that I am always anxious or have anxiety.	5.26%	1
TOTAL		19

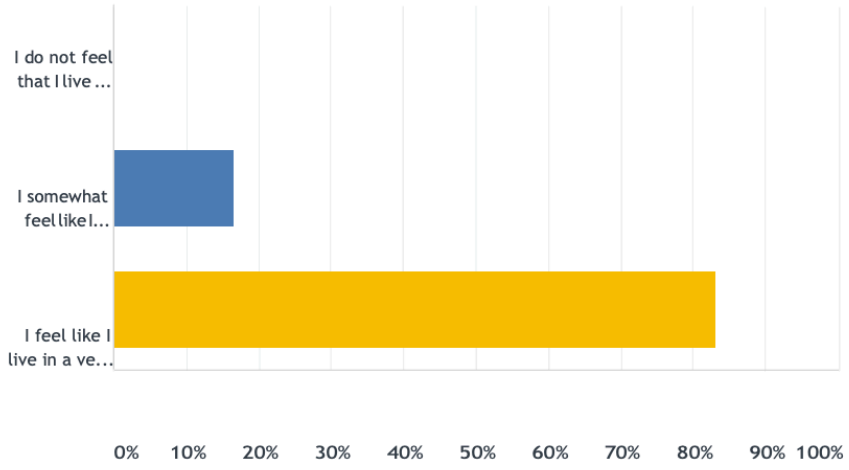
Q10 Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, how often did you feel anxious or anxiety? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 1



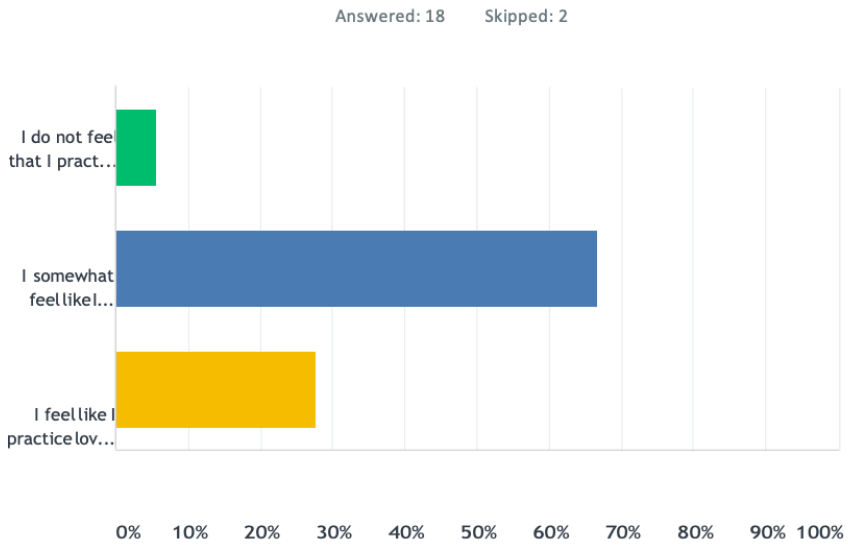
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I did not feel anxious or anxiety on a daily basis.	31.58%	6
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I somewhat felt anxious or anxiety on a daily basis.	68.42%	13
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I felt like I was always anxious or experiencing anxiety.	0.00%	0
TOTAL		19

Q11 I live in a just and generous faith community. Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel that I live in a just and generous faith community.	0.00%	0
I somewhat feel like I live in a just and generous faith community.	16.67%	3
I feel like I live in a very just and generous faith community.	83.33%	15
TOTAL		18

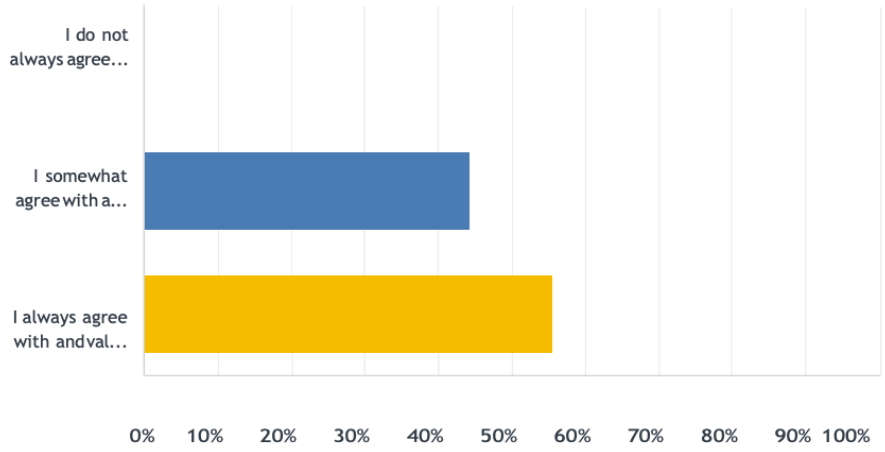
Q12 I practice love in the ways of Jesus. Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel that I practice love in the ways of Jesus.	5.56%	1
I somewhat feel like I practice love in the ways of Jesus.	66.67%	12
I feel like I practice love in the ways of Jesus very well.	27.78%	5
TOTAL		18

Q13 I agree with and value faith community statements as a priority in my life. Which of the following best describes your situation?

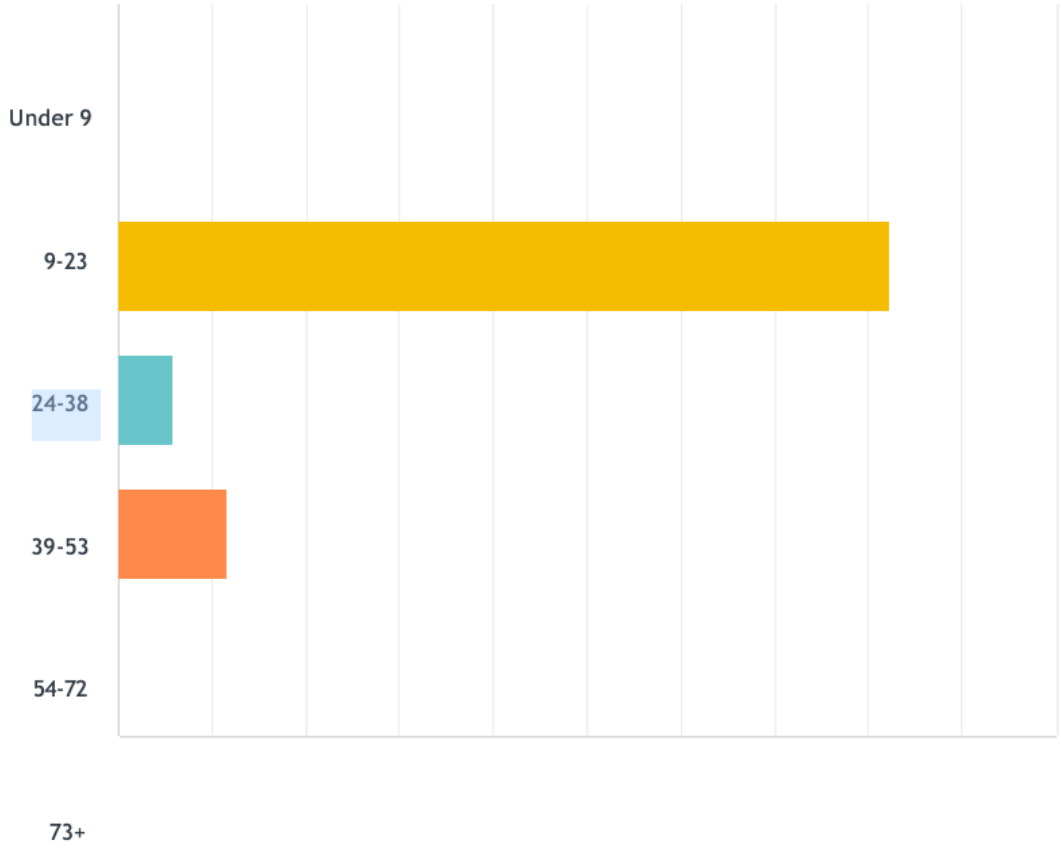
Answered: 18 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not always agree with and value faith community statements as a priority in my life.	0.00%	0
I somewhat agree with and value faith community statements as a priority in my life.	44.44%	8
I always agree with and value faith community statements as a priority in my life.	55.56%	10
TOTAL		18

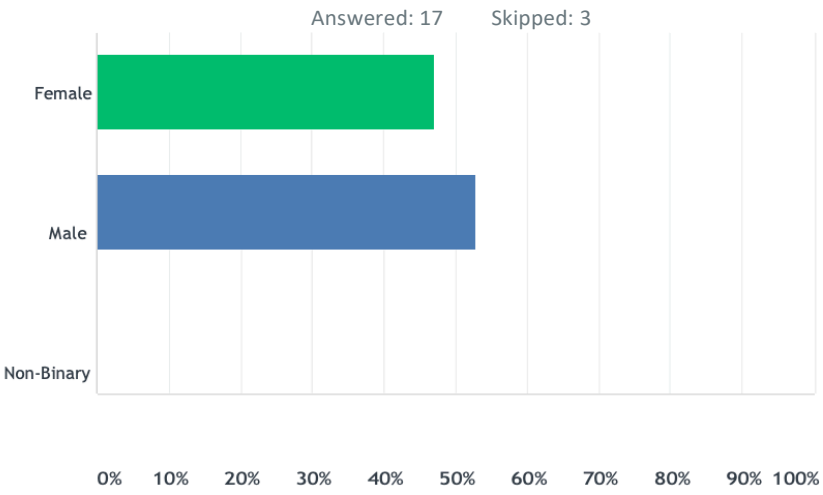
Q14 What is your age?

Answered: 17 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 9	0.00%	0
9-23	0.00%	0
24-38	82.35%	14
39-53	5.88%	1
54-72	11.76%	2
73+	0.00%	0

Q15 What is your gender?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Female	47.06%	8
Male	52.94%	9
Non-Binary	0.00%	0
TOTAL		17

Q16 What is your ethnicity? (Please select all that apply.)

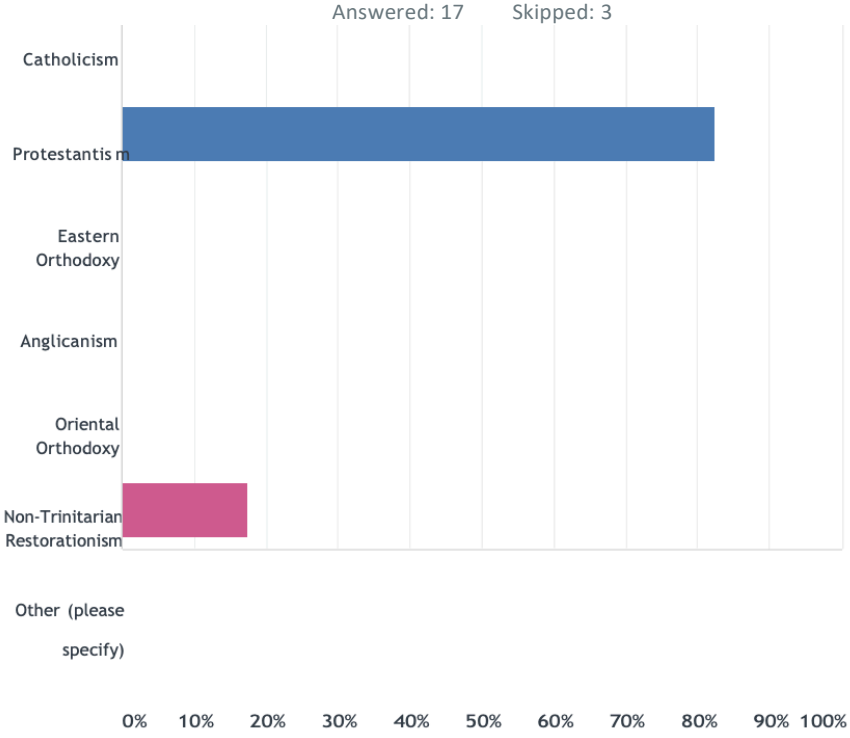
Answered: 17 Skipped: 3

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.00%	0
Asian or Pacific Islander	5.88%	1
Black or African American	0.00%	0
Hispanic or Latino	5.88%	1
White / Caucasian	94.12%	16
Prefer not to answer	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 17		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
	There are no responses.	

Q17 How would you describe your preferred faith tradition?

Answered: 17 Skipped: 3

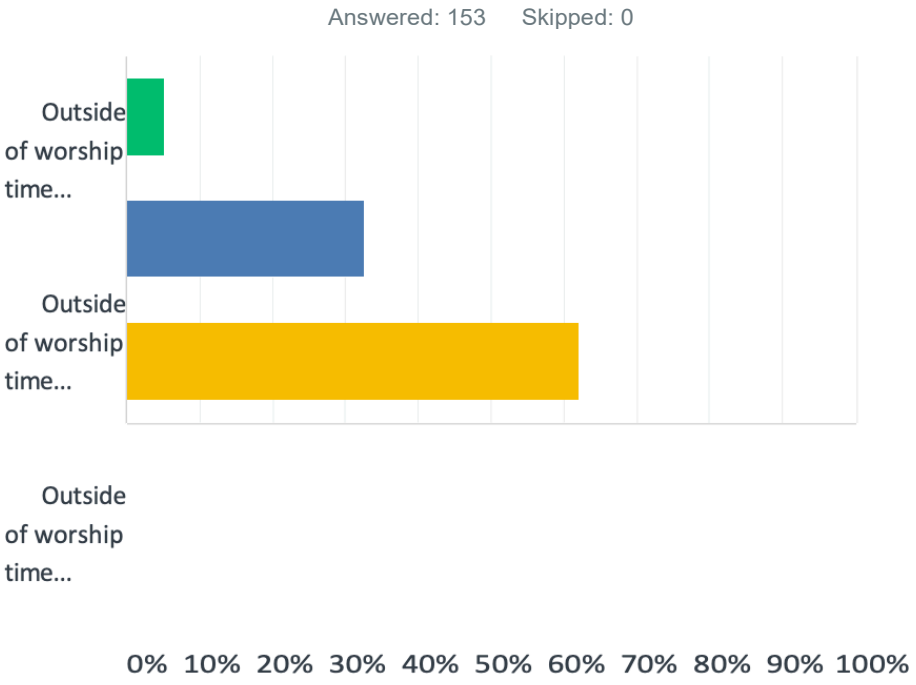


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Catholicism	0.00%	0
Protestantism	82.35%	14
Eastern Orthodoxy	0.00%	0
Anglicanism	0.00%	0
Oriental Orthodoxy	0.00%	0
Non-Trinitarian Restorationism	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	17.65%	3
TOTAL		17

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Reformed	5/6/2020 12:47 PM
2	Non-denominational	5/6/2020 11:58 AM
3	Non-denominational bible speaking church	5/6/2020 11:30 AM

SURVEY 4: LARGE INTERNATIONAL PARACHURG MISSIONS ORGANIZATION

Q1 How well do you feel that you belong to your faith community personally? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?


Answered: 153 Skipped: 0
Outside of worship time...
Outside of worship time...
Outside of worship time...
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Outside of worship time, I do not feel that I belong to my faith community.	5.23%	8
Outside of worship time, I somewhat feel that I belong to my faith community.	32.68%	50
Outside of worship time, I feel that I very much belong to my faith community.	62.09%	95
TOTAL		153

Q2 If you didn’t answer that you feel like you ‘very much belong’ to your faith community then in no more than three words explain why:

Answered: 70 Skipped: 83

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	People's busy schedules	4/1/2020 10:26 AM
2	Involved Many Communities	3/29/2020 12:15 PM
3	N/A	3/2/2020 10:20 AM
4	I feel strongly connected	2/26/2020 1:55 PM
5	n/a	2/25/2020 4:08 PM
6	lack of connection	2/24/2020 4:05 PM
7	no close relationships	2/24/2020 12:06 PM
8	Looking for church	2/24/2020 8:37 AM
9	Lack of community	2/23/2020 1:22 PM
10	lots of differences	2/21/2020 11:38 AM
11	lack of investment	2/21/2020 9:42 AM
12	NA	2/20/2020 12:33 PM
13	I feel unknown	2/20/2020 8:18 AM
14	recently moved	2/19/2020 10:22 AM
15	Time constraints	2/19/2020 8:39 AM
16	White supremacy patriarchy	2/18/2020 10:51 PM
17	New City	2/18/2020 1:21 PM
18	Not initiated with	2/18/2020 1:05 PM
19	I am New-ish	2/18/2020 1:04 PM
20	NA	2/18/2020 12:23 PM
21	I’m part of the LGBT community as well and sometimes churches have not been welcoming of my wife and I.	2/18/2020 12:16 PM
22	fairly new location	2/18/2020 10:46 AM
23	too busy	2/17/2020 4:57 PM
24	Weekly small group	2/17/2020 4:54 PM
25	slowly plugging in	2/17/2020 4:19 PM
26	Family time	2/17/2020 4:06 PM
27	No close friends	2/17/2020 3:08 PM
28	My husband and I aren't plugged into our faith community here as much as we'd like to be because we have a great faith community outside of our church. We also are moving in a few months to a different city, so we chose not to become members.	2/17/2020 1:35 PM
29	N/A	2/17/2020 1:02 PM
30	n/a	2/17/2020 12:35 PM

31	little meaningful interaction	2/17/2020 12:18 PM
32	We were new to the area and most people had established relationships outside the community or already within the community and didn't seem very open.	2/17/2020 12:06 PM
33	I'm assuming by "faith community," you are referring to the Navigators? In three words, I'd say "difference in values/approach"	2/17/2020 12:00 PM
34	confused what you mean by faith community	2/17/2020 11:18 AM
35	Belong more to Navigators	2/17/2020 11:08 AM
36	Just moved	2/17/2020 10:28 AM
37	Less time together	2/17/2020 8:17 AM
38	Trump, Stubborn, and differences	2/17/2020 7:34 AM
39	feels irrelevant	2/17/2020 7:23 AM
40	we don’t hangout	2/17/2020 7:00 AM
41	Lacking personal engagement	2/17/2020 6:30 AM
42	Recently moved	2/17/2020 4:58 AM
43	New church.	2/16/2020 10:44 PM
44	NA	2/16/2020 9:36 PM
45	Relationships are hard	2/16/2020 9:29 PM
46	Distance from church	2/16/2020 9:02 PM
47	Others not intentional	2/16/2020 8:31 PM
48	No invites	2/16/2020 8:15 PM
49	N/a	2/16/2020 7:19 PM
50	Clique young adults in church	2/16/2020 6:17 PM
51	N/a	2/16/2020 6:12 PM
52	No real peers	2/16/2020 5:52 PM
53	Quick, surface conversations	2/16/2020 5:47 PM
54	Work is exhausting	2/16/2020 4:54 PM
55	We just moved to a different city and it’s our third time to the church we feel we would like to make family	2/16/2020 4:32 PM
56	recent relocation	2/16/2020 4:08 PM
57	Limited availability	2/16/2020 4:07 PM
58	New city	2/16/2020 3:44 PM
59	Longing for heart-connection	2/16/2020 3:38 PM
60	Still getting connected	2/16/2020 3:34 PM
61	I find it very difficult to actually connect with people at church beyond the surface level.	2/16/2020 3:12 PM
62	Lack of attendance	2/16/2020 2:27 PM
63	It is hard to connect with a church after leaving the Navigators. In a lot of ways Navs become your church.	2/16/2020 2:26 PM
64	Need closer friends	2/16/2020 2:18 PM

65	N/A	2/16/2020 2:14 PM
66	NA	2/16/2020 2:11 PM
67	n/a	2/16/2020 2:09 PM
68	Relationships take longer to build outside of a college ministry context	2/16/2020 2:09 PM
69	Graduate School	2/16/2020 2:09 PM
70	New church community	2/16/2020 2:05 PM

Q3 In no more than three words describe the most important factor to belonging to a faith community:

Answered: 153 Skipped: 0

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Connection Needs Encouragement	4/10/2020 8:21 PM
2	Christ-centered pursuit	4/1/2020 10:26 AM
3	Fellowship with God	3/29/2020 12:15 PM
4	sharing life together	3/23/2020 6:01 PM
5	Intentional relationships	3/2/2020 4:11 PM
6	Consistency, initiative, individuals	3/2/2020 11:54 AM
7	reminded of God	3/2/2020 11:40 AM
8	relationships, small groups	3/2/2020 10:20 AM
9	Following Jesus wholeheartedly	2/26/2020 4:59 PM
10	Faithful presence	2/26/2020 2:27 PM
11	Biblical, New Creation, and one of the best ways to experience the Lord	2/26/2020 1:55 PM
12	commitment, belonging	2/26/2020 9:24 AM
13	Initiative	2/25/2020 4:08 PM
14	vulnerability	2/24/2020 4:05 PM
15	mutual edification	2/24/2020 12:06 PM
16	Relationships	2/24/2020 8:37 AM
17	Commitment and engagement	2/23/2020 9:06 PM
18	Vulnerability and love	2/23/2020 1:22 PM
19	Fellowship Hope Exhortation	2/22/2020 7:12 PM
20	Personal Relationships	2/22/2020 3:04 PM
21	commitment to membership	2/22/2020 12:52 PM
22	Word and Sacrament	2/22/2020 12:10 PM
23	sacrifice and communication	2/21/2020 11:38 AM
24	bear each others' burdens	2/21/2020 9:42 AM
25	Community, Biblical teaching	2/20/2020 3:53 PM

26	I think the most important factor in belonging to a faith community is feeling that you are known well by multiple people there.	2/20/2020 3:23 PM
27	Vulnerable. Christ-centered. Time	2/20/2020 12:33 PM
28	Accountability, care, development	2/20/2020 8:41 AM
29	Unity, depth, mission	2/20/2020 8:18 AM
30	Body of Christ	2/20/2020 3:06 AM
31	Purpose discipleship Bible	2/19/2020 10:20 PM
32	small group & discipleship	2/19/2020 5:21 PM
33	Support, accountability, friendship	2/19/2020 4:48 PM
34	Be persistent	2/19/2020 2:24 PM
35	Known & Loved	2/19/2020 1:03 PM
36	Connection, authenticity, vulnerability	2/19/2020 12:46 PM
37	Commitment/being known	2/19/2020 12:03 PM
38	Being known	2/19/2020 11:00 AM
39	authenticity, vulnerability, intentionality	2/19/2020 10:22 AM
40	Small group	2/19/2020 8:39 AM
41	Openness humility diversity	2/18/2020 10:51 PM
42	Connection	2/18/2020 1:21 PM
43	Encouraged towards Jesus	2/18/2020 1:05 PM
44	Humbly serve	2/18/2020 1:04 PM
45	Encouragement and Challenge	2/18/2020 12:34 PM
46	Belonging, spurring one another	2/18/2020 12:23 PM
47	LGBT accepting	2/18/2020 12:16 PM
48	Commitment, same faith	2/18/2020 12:16 PM
49	Hospitality	2/18/2020 12:10 PM
50	encourage and challenge	2/18/2020 10:46 AM
51	Encouragement, accountability, community	2/18/2020 10:41 AM
52	Commitment to community	2/18/2020 9:26 AM
53	Intimacy with others	2/18/2020 7:20 AM
54	truth, gospel, encouragement	2/17/2020 7:54 PM
55	Authenticity and time	2/17/2020 4:57 PM
56	Feeling known, accountability	2/17/2020 4:54 PM
57	intentionality	2/17/2020 4:19 PM
58	Spurring one another on in love and good deeds	2/17/2020 4:06 PM
59	Meaningful relationships	2/17/2020 3:08 PM
60	Belonging & Accountability	2/17/2020 2:57 PM
61	Iron sharpening Iron	2/17/2020 1:35 PM

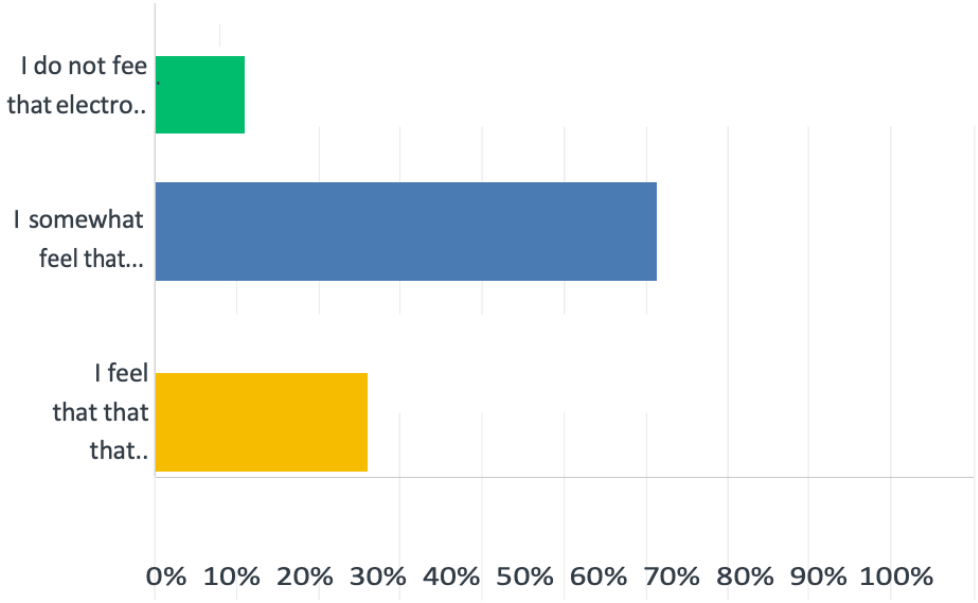
62	Pointing to Jesus	2/17/2020 1:27 PM
63	connected through love	2/17/2020 1:21 PM
64	It's God's will.	2/17/2020 1:18 PM
65	Following Jesus together	2/17/2020 1:02 PM
66	Faithful involvement	2/17/2020 12:35 PM
67	accepted, needed, appreciated	2/17/2020 12:18 PM
68	Vulnerability and support.	2/17/2020 12:06 PM
69	mutual encouragement	2/17/2020 12:00 PM
70	Intentionality, bearing with	2/17/2020 11:55 AM
71	nourishment.	2/17/2020 11:18 AM
72	Experiencing the gospel	2/17/2020 11:08 AM
73	Mutually loving Jesus	2/17/2020 10:54 AM
74	Initiative, Vision, Patience	2/17/2020 10:31 AM
75	Vulnerability, Trust, Personal initiative	2/17/2020 10:28 AM
76	Love	2/17/2020 10:22 AM
77	Connection, Hope, belonging.	2/17/2020 10:08 AM
78	BODY of believers	2/17/2020 9:30 AM
79	Gospel centered relationships	2/17/2020 8:39 AM
80	Community	2/17/2020 8:35 AM
81	making time	2/17/2020 8:25 AM
82	Fellowship	2/17/2020 8:17 AM
83	Consistency, trust, vision	2/17/2020 7:48 AM
84	Commitment	2/17/2020 7:38 AM
85	Servant leadership, missional, and diversity	2/17/2020 7:34 AM
86	Deep, personal relationships	2/17/2020 7:33 AM
87	Stay the course	2/17/2020 7:33 AM
88	encouragement, vulnerability, friendship	2/17/2020 7:26 AM
89	authenticity integrity friendship	2/17/2020 7:23 AM
90	Being known	2/17/2020 7:18 AM
91	Bible-centered	2/17/2020 7:00 AM
92	Friendships Vision Character	2/17/2020 6:30 AM
93	Reciprocal relationships	2/17/2020 4:58 AM
94	Belonging	2/17/2020 2:42 AM
95	Rooted in Christ	2/16/2020 10:53 PM
96	Scripture. Vision. Active.	2/16/2020 10:44 PM
97	Accountability, friendship, learning	2/16/2020 9:53 PM
98	Gospel-centered discipleship	2/16/2020 9:36 PM
99	Spending time together	2/16/2020 9:29 PM

100	Master and mission	2/16/2020 9:13 PM
101	Encouragement accountability	2/16/2020 9:02 PM
102	Consistency, commonality, vulnerability.	2/16/2020 9:02 PM
103	Accountability, encouragement, sharpening	2/16/2020 8:52 PM
104	Intentional friendships	2/16/2020 8:31 PM
105	Inclusion, Acceptance, Gospel	2/16/2020 8:15 PM
106	Trust, presence, commonality	2/16/2020 8:05 PM
107	Commitment to involvement	2/16/2020 8:05 PM
108	Encouragement	2/16/2020 7:25 PM
109	Deep Biblical convictions	2/16/2020 7:19 PM
110	Intentional relationships	2/16/2020 7:08 PM
111	Like minded believers	2/16/2020 6:22 PM
112	Connecting, Walk in Spirit	2/16/2020 6:17 PM
113	A like-minded community	2/16/2020 6:12 PM
114	Everyday exhortation	2/16/2020 5:54 PM
115	Desiring God's glory	2/16/2020 5:52 PM
116	Honesty and trust	2/16/2020 5:47 PM
117	Eucharist and fellowship	2/16/2020 5:36 PM
118	time together	2/16/2020 5:22 PM
119	genuine friendships	2/16/2020 5:20 PM
120	Just getting involved	2/16/2020 4:54 PM
121	Consistent small group	2/16/2020 4:53 PM
122	Proximity and time	2/16/2020 4:45 PM
123	In Jesus Christ	2/16/2020 4:32 PM
124	Time together	2/16/2020 4:29 PM
125	intentionality	2/16/2020 4:08 PM
126	Commitment and growth	2/16/2020 4:07 PM
127	Love	2/16/2020 4:05 PM
128	Christ-centeredness	2/16/2020 4:01 PM
129	Love of Jesus	2/16/2020 3:49 PM
130	Common belief	2/16/2020 3:45 PM
131	Accepting/initiating invitations	2/16/2020 3:44 PM
132	Safety Challenge Fun	2/16/2020 3:39 PM
133	Conviction Vulnerability Perspective	2/16/2020 3:38 PM
134	Have deep relationships	2/16/2020 3:34 PM
135	Intentionality. Church outside the walls.	2/16/2020 3:28 PM
136	Authenticity and transparency	2/16/2020 3:12 PM
137	True vulnerability	2/16/2020 3:08 PM

138	Gospel reminders	2/16/2020 2:46 PM
139	Biblical accountability, prayer, support	2/16/2020 2:43 PM
140	truth, growth, friendship	2/16/2020 2:39 PM
141	Obedience community love	2/16/2020 2:31 PM
142	Intentionality	2/16/2020 2:27 PM
143	Jesus, Scripture, missions	2/16/2020 2:26 PM
144	Deep friendship/time	2/16/2020 2:18 PM
145	Time spent together with others in your community outside of the normal scheduled "Sundays".	2/16/2020 2:16 PM
146	Gospel-centered, safe	2/16/2020 2:14 PM
147	Being involved in others' lives, knowing personal facts about their lives and they know mine.	2/16/2020 2:13 PM
148	Connection Groups	2/16/2020 2:11 PM
149	Genuine and sincere	2/16/2020 2:09 PM
150	Vulnerability, Service, Participation	2/16/2020 2:09 PM
151	Studies God's word	2/16/2020 2:09 PM
152	Common mission	2/16/2020 2:06 PM
153	Feeling cared for	2/16/2020 2:05 PM

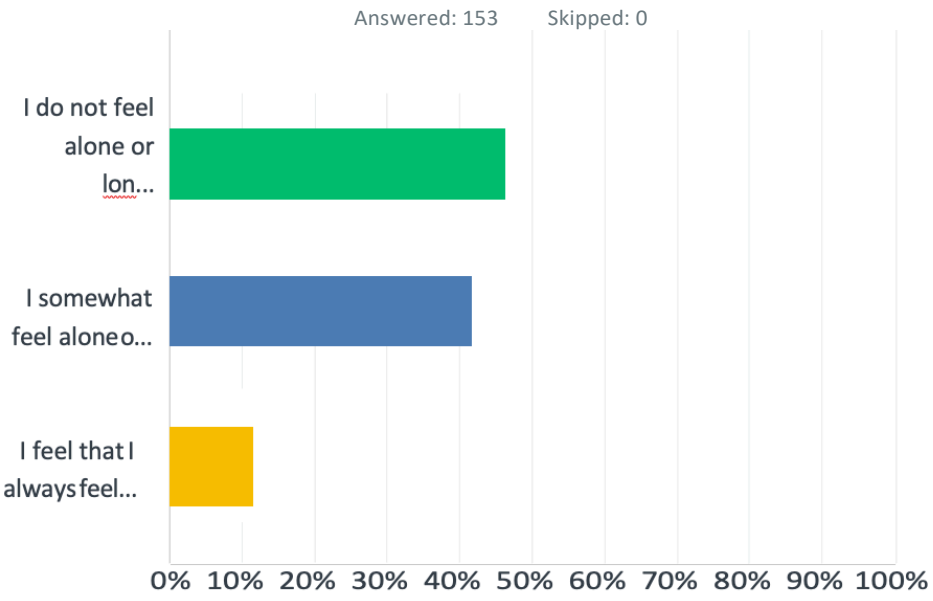
Q4 How important is an electronic medium or tool used in connecting personally with other people? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

Answered: 153 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel that electronic tools help me connect personally with other people.	12.42%	19
I somewhat feel that electronic tools help me connect personally with other people.	61.44%	94
I feel that that that electronic tools are very helpful in connecting personally with other people.	26.14%	40
TOTAL		153

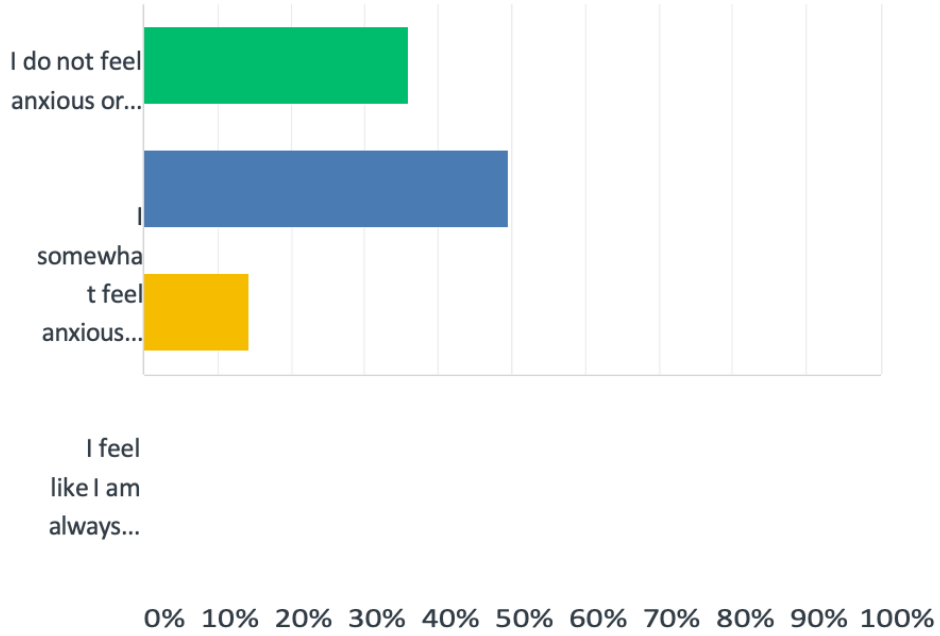
Q5 How often do you feel alone or lonely? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel alone or lonely on a daily basis.	46.41%	71
I somewhat feel alone or lonely on a daily basis.	41.83%	64
I feel that I always feel alone or lonely.		
TOTAL		153

Q6 How often do you feel anxious or anxiety? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

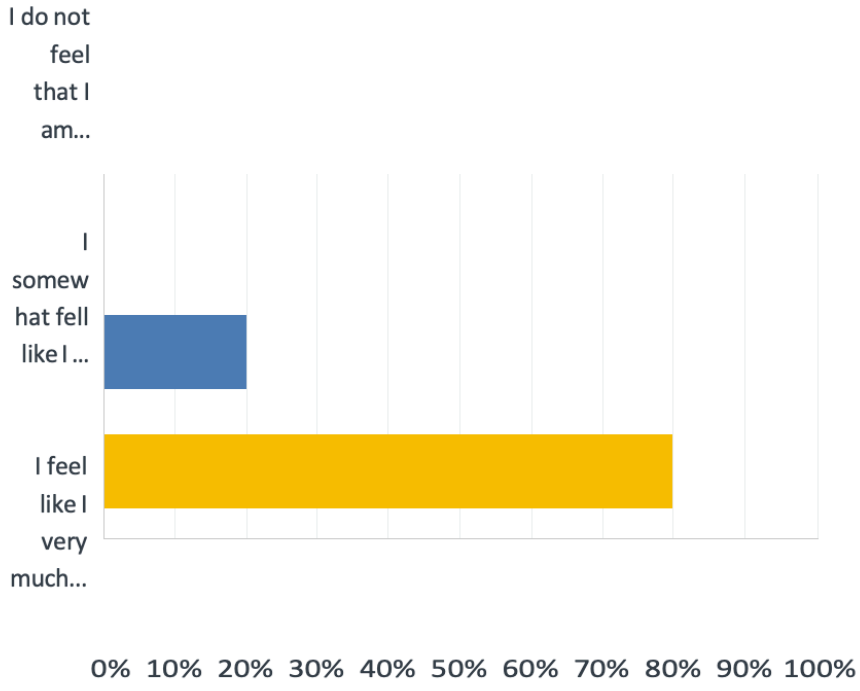
Answered: 153 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel anxious or anxiety on a daily basis.	35.95%	55
I somewhat feel anxious or anxiety on a daily basis.	49.67%	76
I feel like I am always anxious or experiencing anxiety.	14.38%	22
TOTAL		153

Q7 I am walking with Jesus. Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

Answered: 153 Skipped: 0

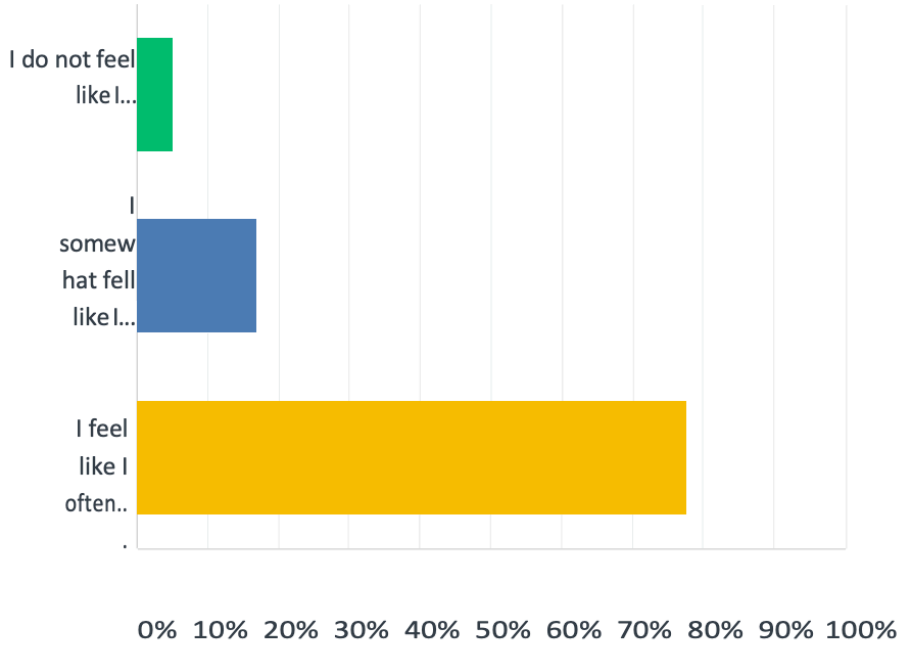


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel that I am walking with Jesus.	0.00%	0
I somewhat fell like I am walking with Jesus.	19.61%	30
I feel like I very much walking with Jesus.	80.39%	123
TOTAL		153

Q8 I know and live the scriptures. Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel that I know and live the scriptures.	0.65%	1
I somewhat fell like I know and live the scriptures.	29.41%	45
I feel like I know and live the scriptures very well.	69.93%	107
TOTAL		153

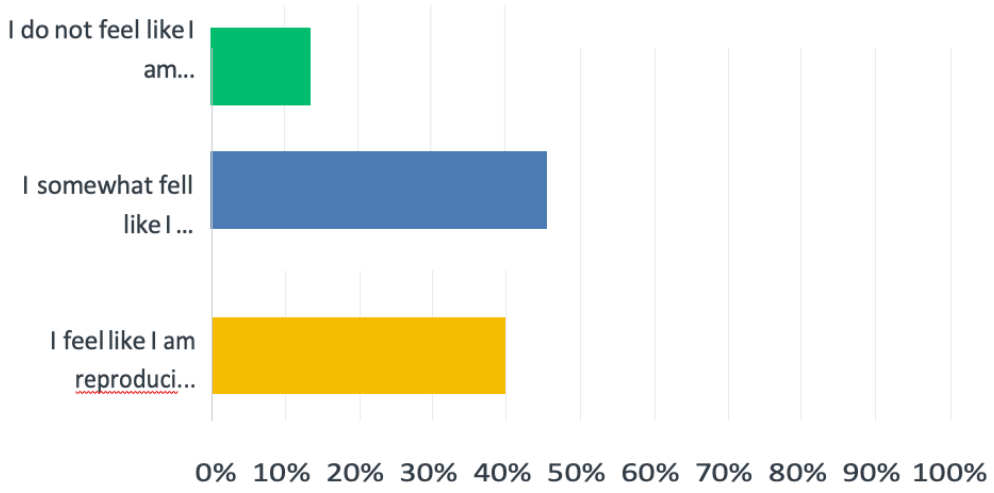
Q9 I participate in a faith community. Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel like I participate in a faith community.	5.23%	8
I somewhat fell like I participate in a faith community.	16.99%	26
I feel like I often participate in a faith community.	77.78%	119
TOTAL		153

Q10 I am reproducing spiritual generations. Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

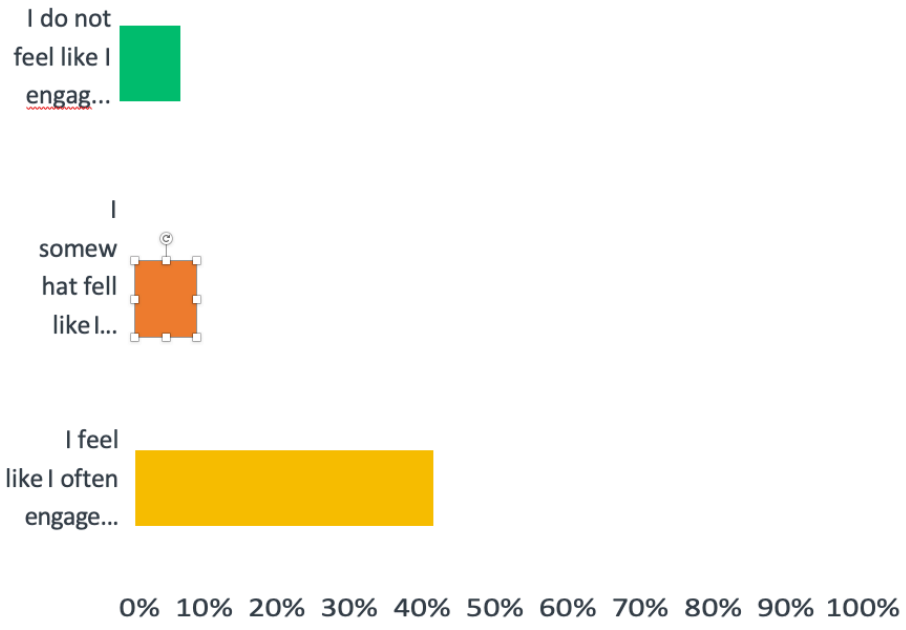
Answered: 153 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel like I am reproducing spiritual generations.	13.73%	21
I somewhat fell like I am reproducing spiritual generations.	45.75%	70
I feel like I am reproducing spiritual generations very well.	40.52%	62
TOTAL		153

Q11 I engage with those who don’t know Christ. Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

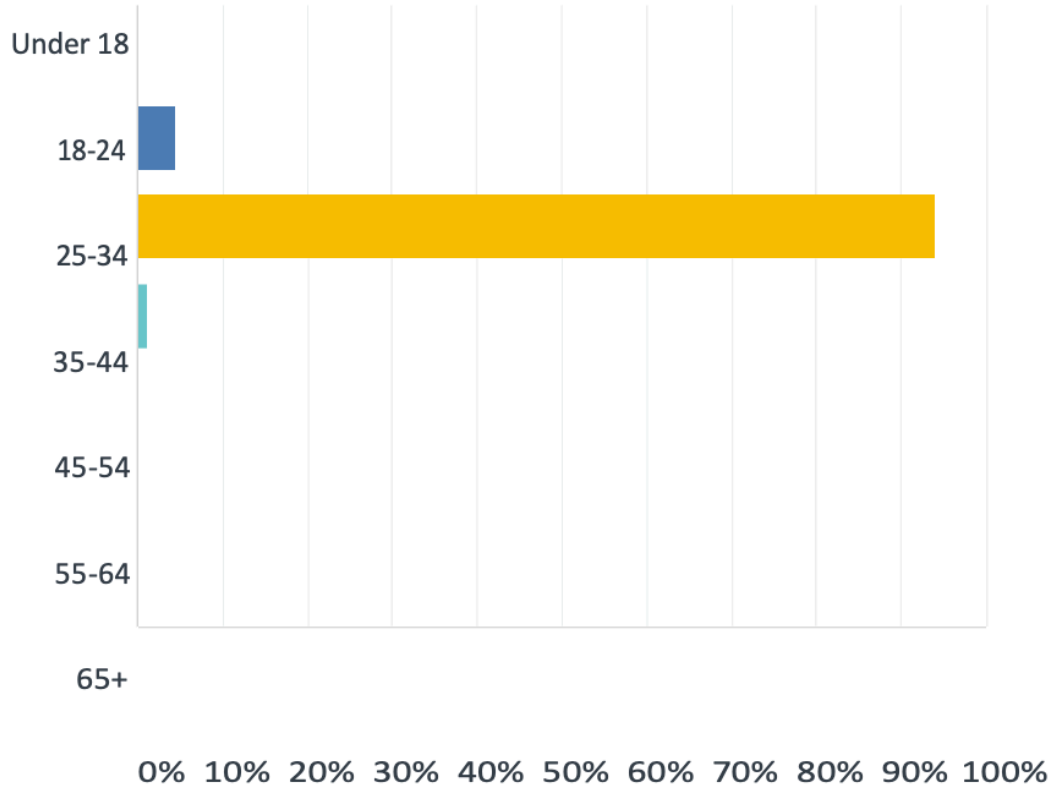
Answered: 153 Skipped: 0



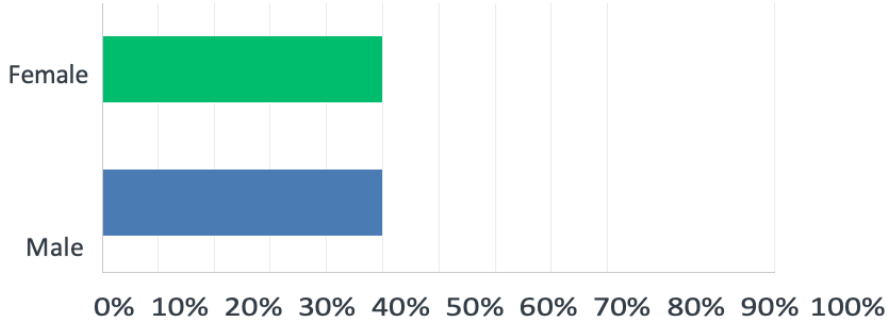
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel like I engage with those who don’t know Christ.	8.50%	13
I somewhat fell like I engage with those who don’t know Christ.	50.33%	77
I feel like I often engage with those who don't know Christ.	41.18%	63
TOTAL		153

Q12 What is your age?

Answered: 153 Skipped: 0



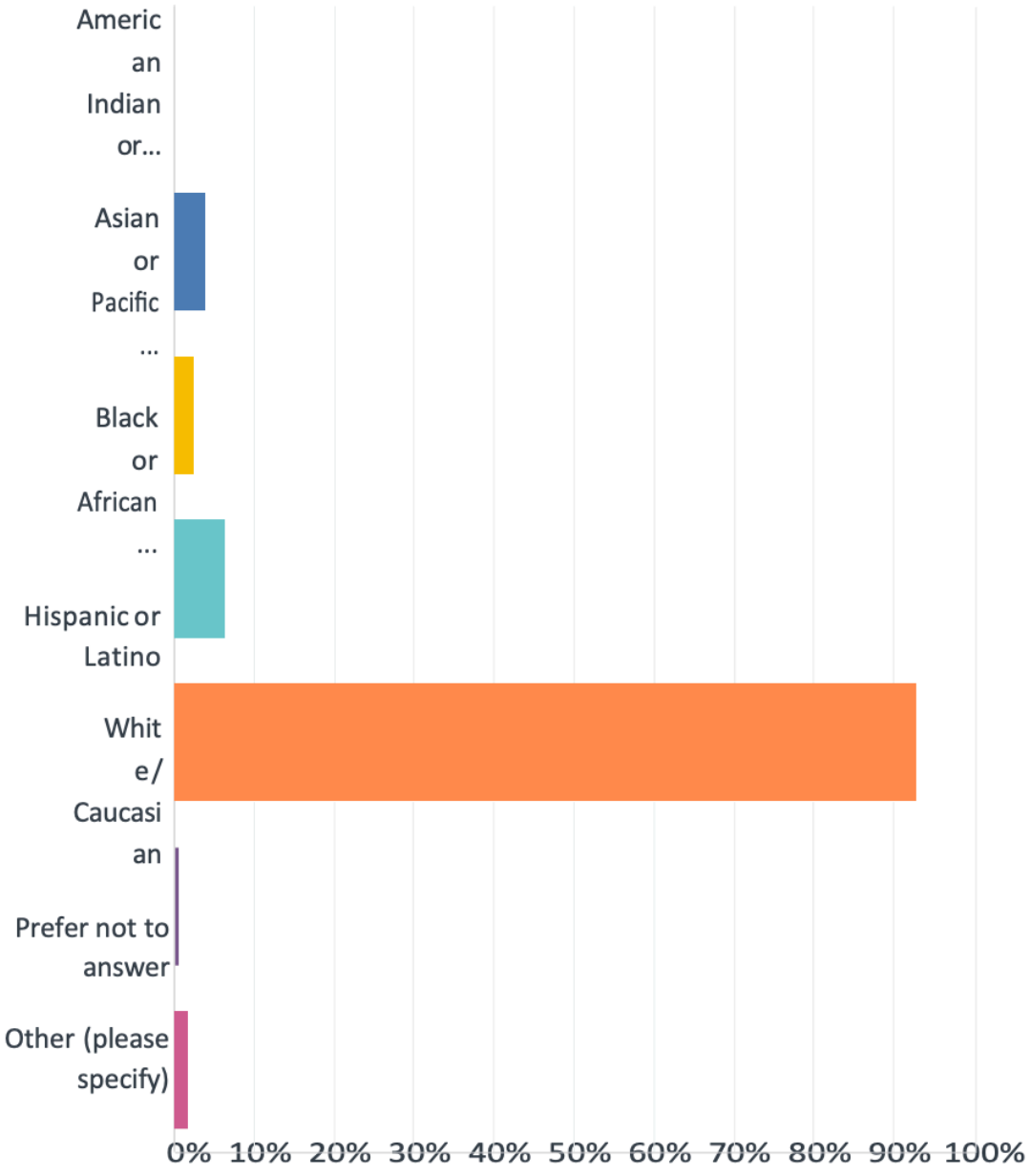
Q13 What is your sex?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Female	49.67%	76
Male		
TOTAL		153

Q14 What is your ethnicity? (Please select all that apply.)

Answered: 153 Skipped: 0


American Indian or...
Asian or Pacific ...
Black or African ...
Hispanic or Latino
White/ Caucasian
Prefer not to answer
Other (please specify)
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.00%	0
Asian or Pacific Islander	3.92%	6
Black or African American	2.61%	4
Hispanic or Latino	6.54%	10
White / Caucasian	92.81%	142
Prefer not to answer	0.65%	1
Other (please specify)		
Total Respondents: 153		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Caribbean	2/17/2020 12:00 PM
2	Middle Eastern	2/16/2020 5:20 PM
3	European American	2/16/2020 4:45 PM

Q15 Which of the following best describes your job function?

Answered: 153 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Accounting	0.00%	0
Administrative	3.92%	6
Advertising / Marketing	0.00%	0
Analyst	1.96%	3
Art/Creative/Design	2.61%	4
Business Development	0.65%	1
Consulting	0.00%	0
Customer Service	2.61%	4
Distribution	0.00%	0
Health Care Provider (Doctor)	1.31%	2
Health Care Provider (Nurse)	1.96%	3
Health Care Provider (Dentist, Orthodontist, Endodontist)	0.00%	0
Health Care Provider (Dental Hygienist)	0.00%	0

Health Care Provider (Other)	9.15%	14
Education	7.84%	12
Engineering	1.31%	2
Finance	2.61%	4
General Business	0.00%	0
GIG Economy Job	0.00%	0
Human Resources	1.96%	3
Information Technology	1.96%	3
Legal	1.96%	3
Management	0.65%	1
Manufacturing	0.00%	0
Ministry	44.44%	68
Non-Paid Work	1.96%	3
Production	0.00%	0
Product Management	0.00%	0
Project Management	0.00%	0
Public Relations	0.00%	0
Purchasing	0.00%	0
Quality Assurance	0.00%	0
Research	0.00%	0
Sales	2.61%	4
Science	0.00%	0
Strategy/Planning	2.61%	4
Supply Chain	0.00%	0
Training	2.61%	4

Q16 How would you describe your preferred faith tradition?

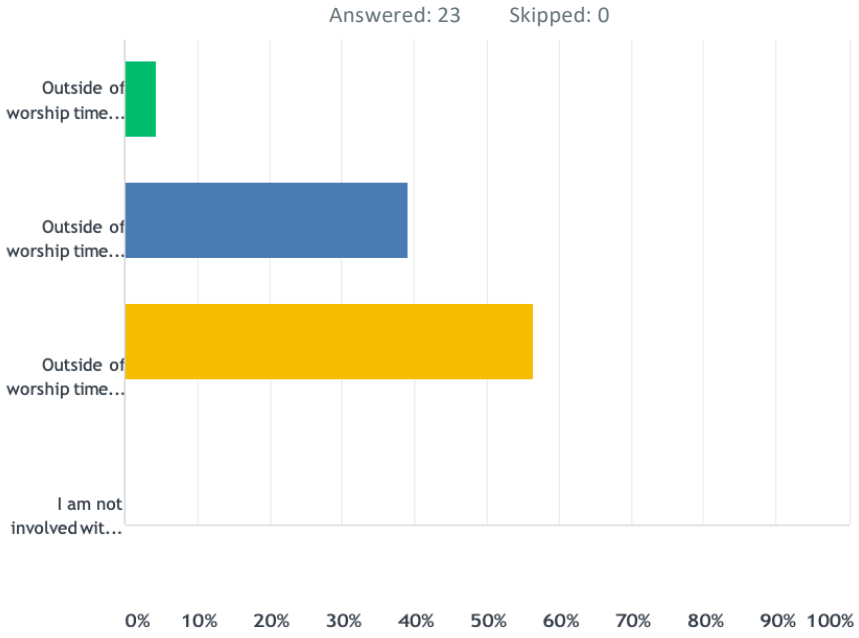
Answered: 153 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Catholicism	0.65%	1
Protestantism	84.97%	130
Eastern Orthodoxy	0.00%	0
Anglicanism	0.65%	1
Oriental Orthodoxy	0.00%	0
Non-Trinitarian Restorationism	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	13.73%	21
TOTAL		15

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Non denomination	2/24/2020 8:37 AM
2	Passion City Church, "a Jesus Church" as they describe themselves	2/22/2020 7:12 PM
3	I don't know a ton about denominations, my church is currently non-denominational.	2/19/2020 5:21 PM
4	Nondenominational	2/19/2020 12:46 PM
5	Evangelical, Baptist or covenant	2/19/2020 8:39 AM
6	Christian Universalism / Mysticism	2/18/2020 10:51 PM
7	We're figuring that out. Somewhere in between Protestant and Anglican/Episcopalian	2/18/2020 1:21 PM
8	Episcopal	2/18/2020 12:16 PM
9	Christian	2/18/2020 12:10 PM
10	Bible follower	2/18/2020 10:46 AM
11	other	2/17/2020 11:18 AM
12	non-denominational	2/17/2020 7:34 AM
13	I don’t know the “titles” well enough to pick but reformed beliefs and go to a Baptist Church that is more concerned with the Scriptures and God’s glory/gospel than denomination glory	2/16/2020 9:36 PM
14	Nondenominational Christian	2/16/2020 8:31 PM
15	Evangelical	2/16/2020 6:17 PM
16	Non-denominational evangelical christian	2/16/2020 5:52 PM
17	Inter denominational	2/16/2020 4:45 PM
18	Pentecostal	2/16/2020 4:07 PM
19	Non-Denominational	2/16/2020 3:38 PM
20	Christian	2/16/2020 2:18 PM
21	Non-denominational Christian	2/16/2020 2:14 PM

SURVEY 5: SMALL GROUP WITHIN LARGE CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL PARACHURCH MISSIONS ORGANIZATION

Q1 How well do you feel that you belong to your faith community personally? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Outside of worship time, I do not feel that I belong to my faith community.	4.35%	1
Outside of worship time, I somewhat feel that I belong to my faith community.	39.13%	9
Outside of worship time, I feel that I very much belong to my faith community.	56.52%	13
I am not involved with a faith community.	0.00%	0
TOTAL		23

Q2 If you didn't answer that you feel like you 'very much belong' to your faith community then in no more than three words explain why:

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	no real relationships	4/23/2020 4:08 PM
2	No specific church	4/23/2020 7:56 AM
3	Only at events	4/21/2020 7:53 PM
4	N/A	4/21/2020 5:36 PM
5	Lack of vulnerability	4/21/2020 4:46 PM
6	New and starting	4/21/2020 4:10 PM
7	Personality differences	4/21/2020 2:41 PM
8	In the military	4/21/2020 2:40 PM
9	Differences in belief	4/21/2020 2:40 PM
10	Controlling leadership	4/21/2020 2:40 PM

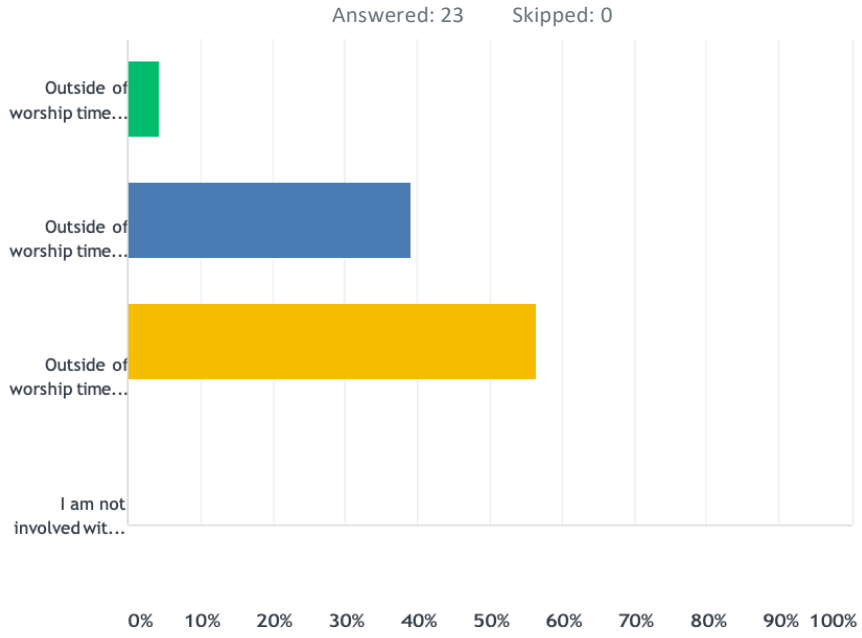
Q3 In no more than three words describe the most important factor to belonging to a faith community:

Answered: 23 Skipped: 0

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Authenticity, striving, charity	4/25/2020 1:16 AM
2	Humility, charity, investment	4/23/2020 8:34 PM
3	genuine, abiding friendships	4/23/2020 4:08 PM
4	Having intimate community	4/23/2020 7:56 AM
5	Consistently showing up	4/22/2020 2:07 PM
6	Leadership	4/22/2020 7:09 AM
7	Closer to Heaven	4/21/2020 7:53 PM
8	Education	4/21/2020 7:49 PM
9	Acceptance and encouragement	4/21/2020 6:00 PM
10	Everyone is geared toward loving and worshipping God and striving for holiness to the best of their capacity	4/21/2020 5:36 PM
11	To be known	4/21/2020 4:46 PM
12	being invited, welcomed	4/21/2020 4:10 PM
13	Accessibility and openness	4/21/2020 3:18 PM
14	Participation in sacraments	4/21/2020 3:17 PM
15	Ability to lead my other friends and relatives to understand the faith more through examples and knowledge of our faith	4/21/2020 2:59 PM
16	Striving together	4/21/2020 2:57 PM
17	Support	4/21/2020 2:48 PM

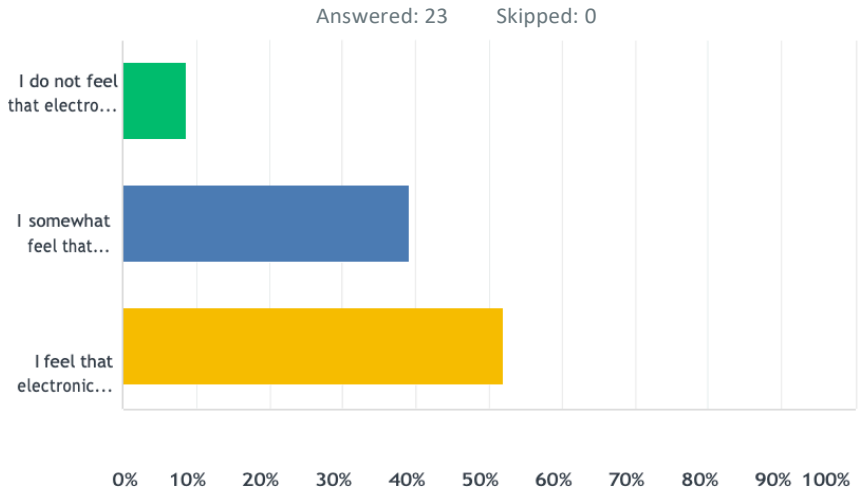
18	Body of Christ	4/21/2020 2:47 PM
19	Intentionally, open hearts/minds	4/21/2020 2:41 PM
20	Accountability	4/21/2020 2:41 PM
21	Testimony	4/21/2020 2:40 PM
22	Following Jesus together.	4/21/2020 2:40 PM
23	Loving one another	4/21/2020 2:40 PM

Q4 Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, how well did you feel that you belonged to your faith community personally? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Outside of worship time, I do not feel that I belong to my faith community.	4.35%	1
Outside of worship time, I somewhat feel that I belong to my faith community.	39.13%	9
Outside of worship time, I feel that I very much belong to my faith community.	56.52%	13
I am not involved with a faith community.	0.00%	0
TOTAL		23

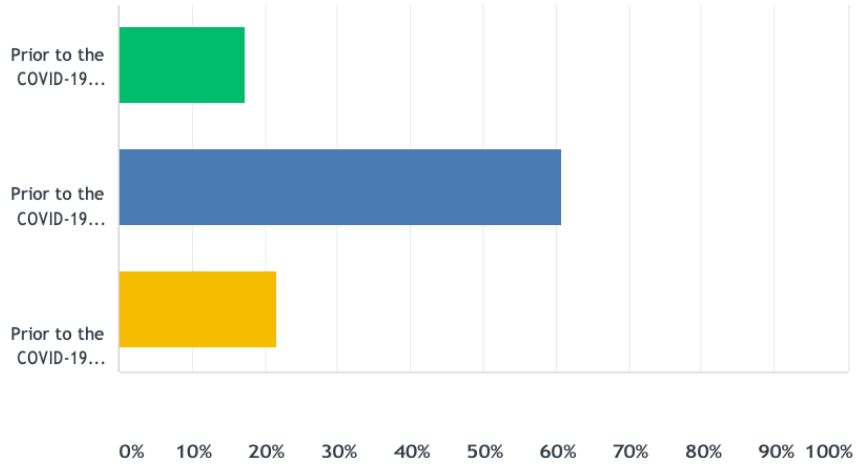
Q5 How important is an electronic medium or tool used in connecting personally with other people? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel that electronic tools help me connect personally with other people.	8.70%	2
I somewhat feel that electronic tools help me connect personally with other people.	39.13%	9
I feel that electronic tools are very helpful in connecting personally with other people.	52.17%	12
TOTAL		23

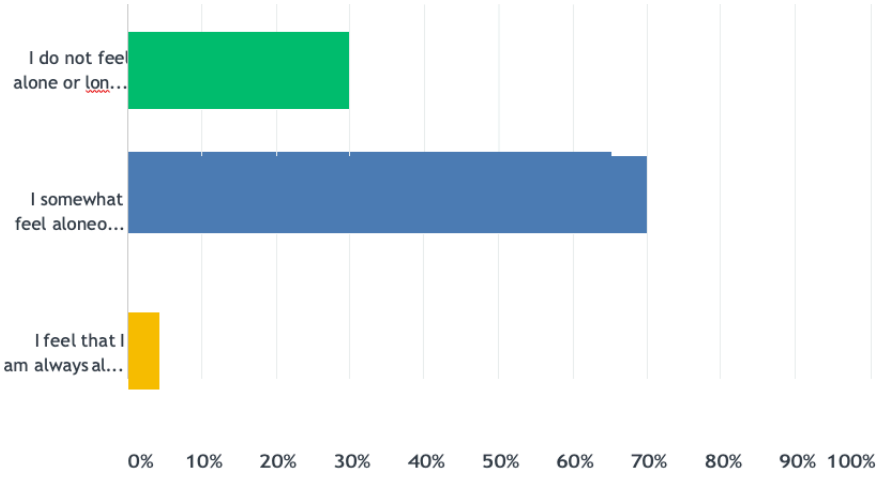
Q6 Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, how important was an electronic medium or tool used in connecting personally with other people? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I did not feel that electronic tools helped me connect personally with other people.	17.39%	4
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I somewhat felt that electronic tools helped me connect personally with other people.	60.87%	14
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I felt that electronic tools were very helpful in connecting personally with other people.	21.74%	5
TOTAL		23

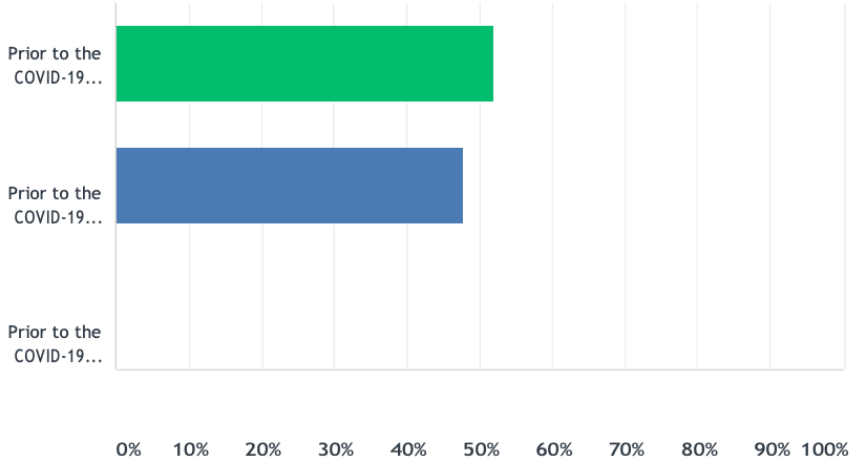
Q7 How often do you feel alone or lonely? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel alone or lonely on a daily basis.	30.43%	7
I somewhat feel alone or lonely on a daily basis.	65.22%	15
I feel that I am always alone or lonely.	4.35%	1
TOTAL		23

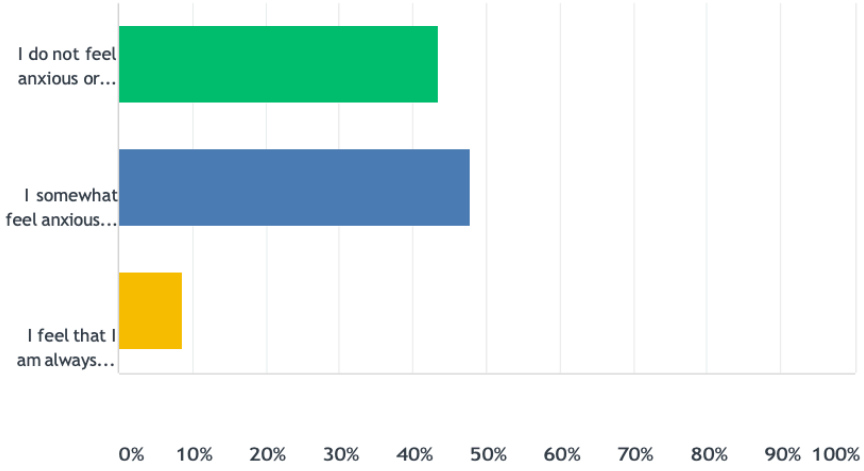
Q8 Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, how often did you feel alone or lonely? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I did not feel alone or lonely on a daily basis.		52.17%	12
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I somewhat felt alone or lonely on a daily basis.		47.83%	11
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I felt like I was always alone or lonely.		0.00%	
		0	23
TOTAL			

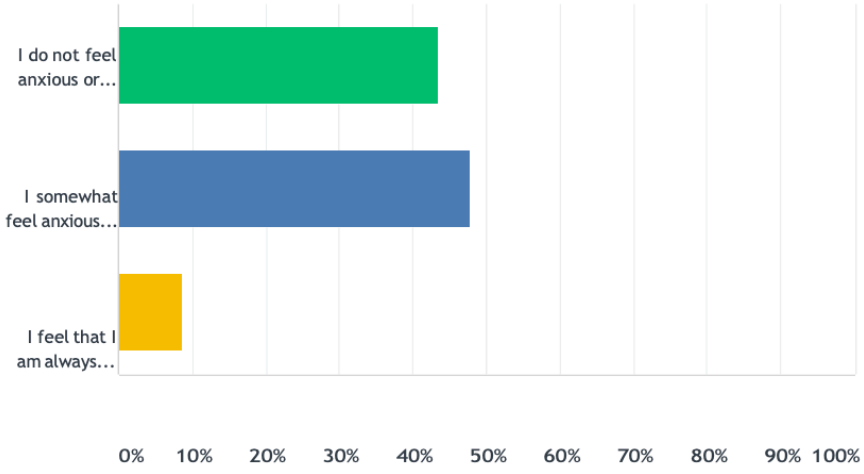
Q9 How often do you feel anxious or anxiety? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel anxious or anxiety on a daily basis.	43.48%	10
I somewhat feel anxious or anxiety on a daily basis.	47.83%	11
I feel that I am always anxious or have anxiety.	8.70%	2
TOTAL		23

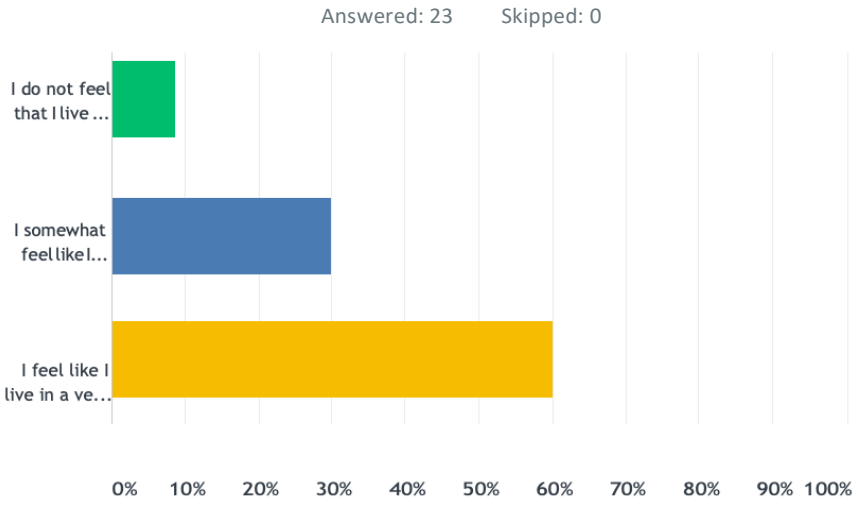
Q10 Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, how often did you feel anxious or anxiety? Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel anxious or anxiety on a daily basis.	43.48%	10
I somewhat feel anxious or anxiety on a daily basis.	47.83%	11
I feel that I am always anxious or have anxiety.	8.70%	2
TOTAL		23

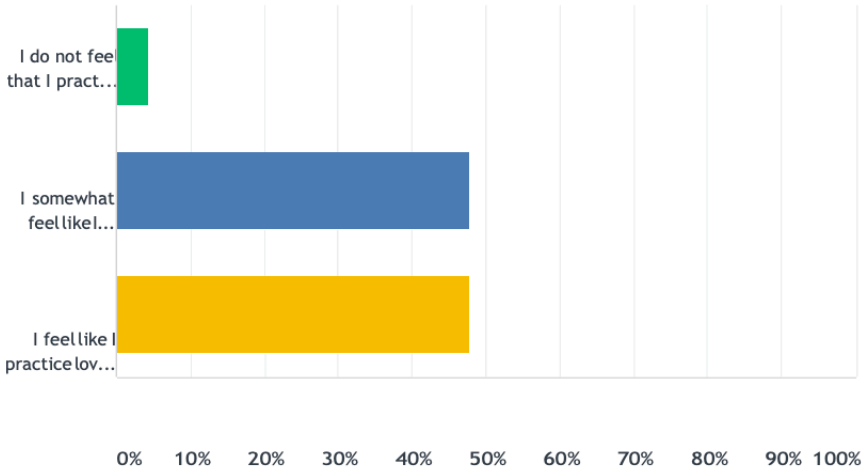
Q11 I live in a just and generous faith community. Which of the following statements best describes your situation?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel that I live in a just and generous faith community.	8.70%	2
I somewhat feel like I live in a just and generous faith community.	30.43%	7
I feel like I live in a very just and generous faith community.	60.87%	14
TOTAL		23

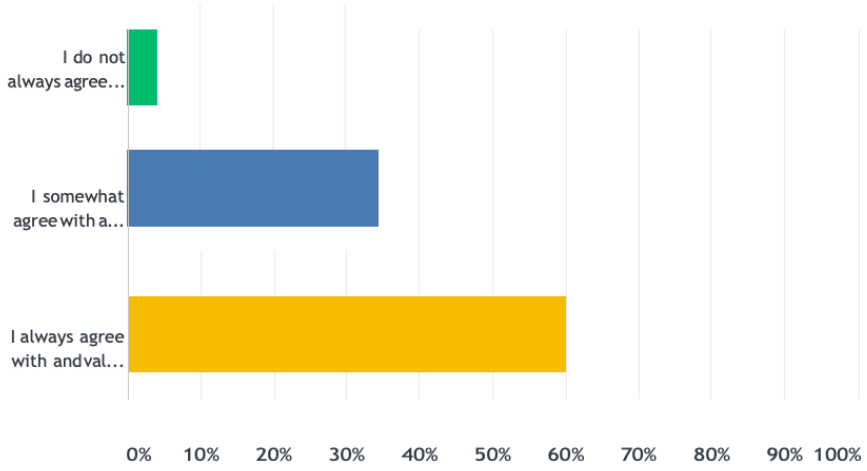
Q12 I practice love in the ways of Jesus. Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not feel that I practice love in the ways of Jesus.	4.35%	1
I somewhat feel like I practice love in the ways of Jesus.	47.83%	11
I feel like I practice love in the ways of Jesus very well.	47.83%	11
TOTAL		23

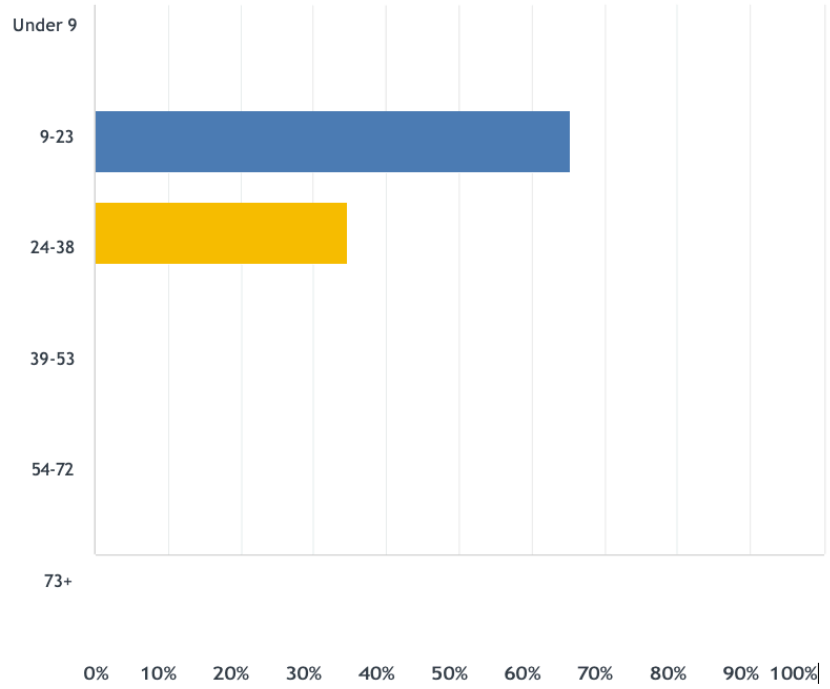
Q13 I agree with and value faith community statements as a priority in my life. Which of the following best describes your situation?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I do not always agree with and value faith community statements as a priority in my life.	4.35%	1
I somewhat agree with and value faith community statements as a priority in my life.	34.78%	8
I always agree with and value faith community statements as a priority in my life.	60.87%	14
TOTAL		23

Q14 What is your age?

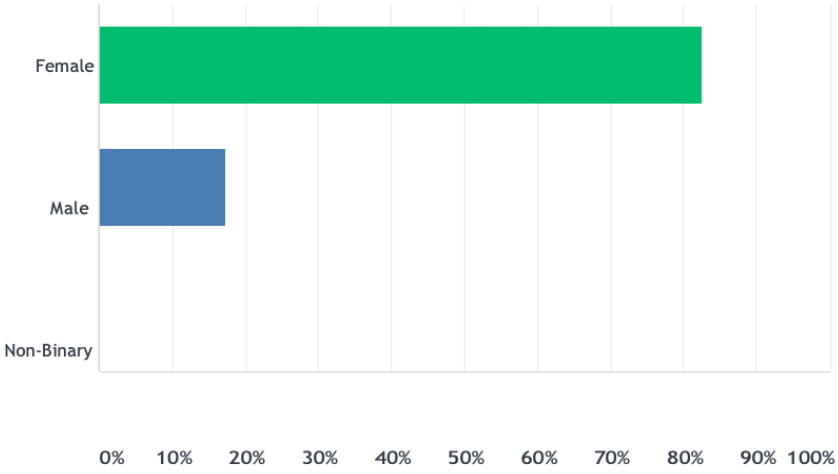
Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 9	0.00%	0
9-23	65.22%	15
24-38	34.78%	8
39-53	0.00%	0
54-72	0.00%	0
73+	0.00%	0
TOTAL		23

Q15 What is your gender?

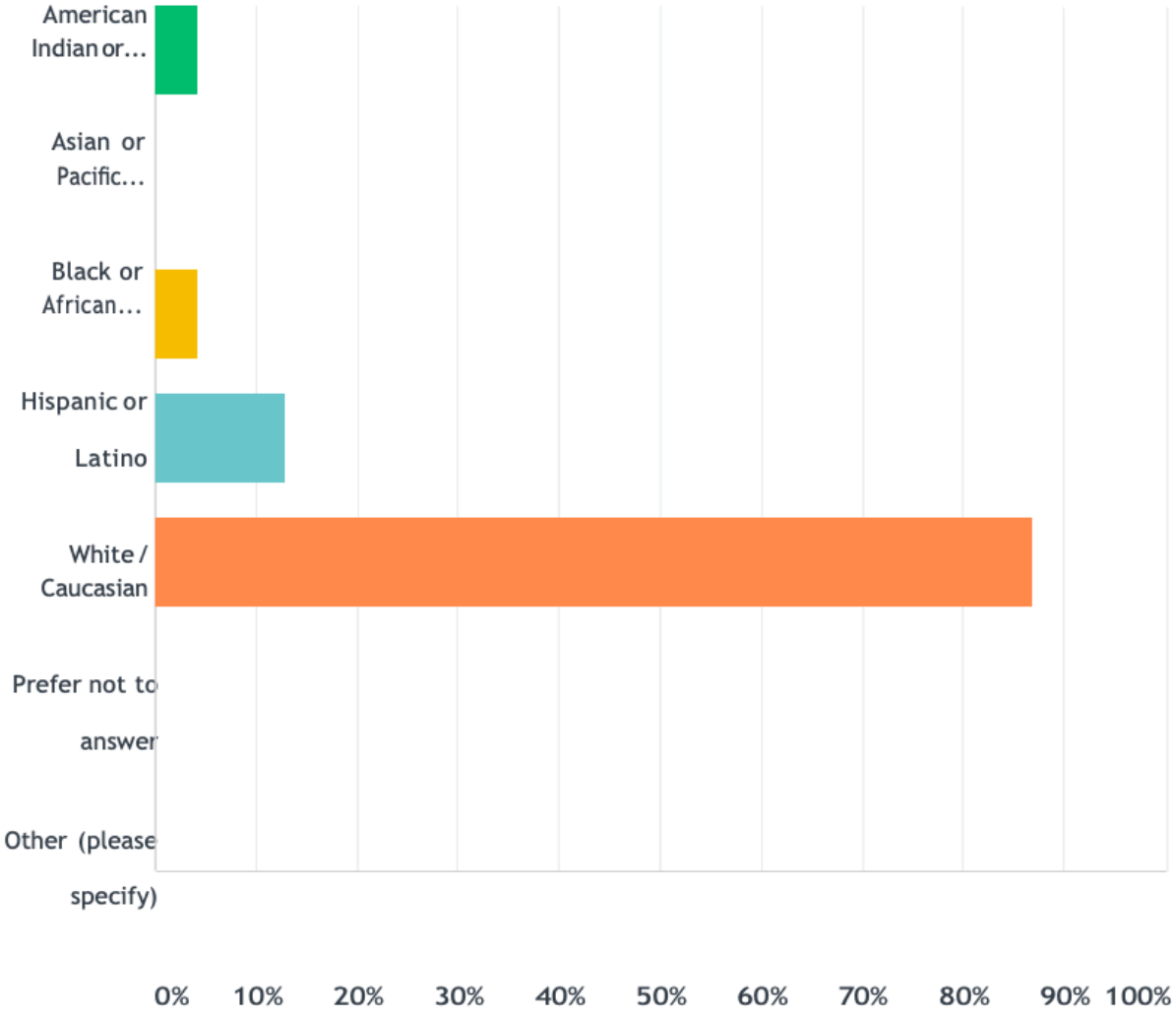
Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Female	82.61%	19
Male	17.39%	4
Non-Binary		0.00%
		0
TOTAL		23

Q16 What is your ethnicity? (Please select all that apply.)

Answered: 23 Skipped: 0

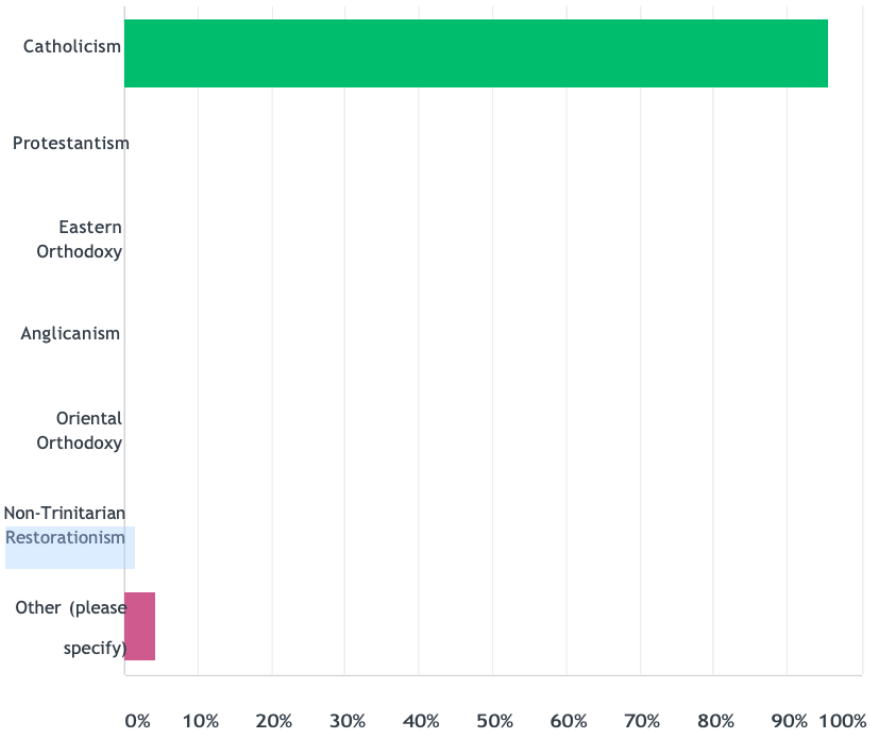


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	4.35%	1
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.00%	0
Black or African American	4.35%	1
Hispanic or Latino	13.04%	3
White / Caucasian	86.96%	20
Prefer not to answer	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 23		

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
	There are no responses.	

Q17 How would you describe your preferred faith tradition?

Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Catholicism	95.65%	22
Protestantism	0.00%	0
Eastern Orthodoxy	0.00%	0
Anglicanism	0.00%	0
Oriental Orthodoxy	0.00%	0
Non-Trinitarian Restorationism	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	4.35%	1
TOTAL		23

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Catholic and Protestant	4/21/2020 2:40 PM

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Survey Follow Up:

Thank you so much for meeting with me, I really appreciate your help and your insight. Today's interview should only take about 15 minutes. This interview will be recorded, and your name and any personal information will be redacted from the transcript. For data tracking purposes, I am conversing with respondent *"insert tracking number"*.

The following three scenarios describe people who participate in their faith community. After each scenario I will ask the following questions, one at a time:

-What in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
-What in this scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Scenario 1.A
-These Individuals Are A Committed Couple of 10 Years ID
-They are Married with a marriage license LI
-They have one son C
-One individual is a teacher, and one individual is a nurse ID
-They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee ID
-They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids C
-They attend church every week LO
-They tithe 10% F
-They do not hold leadership positions in the church A
-They attend a small group weekly LO
-They participate in communion weekly S
-They show personal affection in public at church S

-First Question, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
-Second Question, what in this scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Scenario 1.B
I now have more information about this scenario:
-This couple is a Lesbian couple ID
-One woman is a Christian and one woman is not a Christian ID
-Both women are white or Caucasian. ID
-They want their son to be raised in a faith community C

- First Question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

- Second Question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Now, I have a second scenario and will ask the same two questions following the scenario:

Scenario 2.A
-This person is 34 years old ID
-She is a female ID
-She is a dentist ID
-She serves in the Navy Reserves ID
-She is a classically trained piano player ID
-She lives in New York City, NY ID
-She works in public health to provide dental care to the homeless C
-She tithes 10% of her dental and Navy income to the church F
-She is unmarried S

- First Question, What in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
- Second Question, What in this scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Scenario 2.B
I now have more information about this scenario:
-She is an Asian American and is adopted from Korea ID
-She lives with her significant other LI
-She attends 2 different churches about 1 time per month each LO
-She tithes 10% but only tithes to one of the churches she attends F
-She hops between churches so she can play piano and serve on different worship teams A

- First Question, Considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
- Second Question, Considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Now, I have a third and final scenario and will ask the same two questions following the scenario:

Scenario 3.A
-This person is a seminary student ID
-This person is 28 years old and is a male ID
-He is serving as a youth pastor at his local church ID
-He teaches Sunday school to junior and senior high students C
-He highlights diversity in the church by introducing various worship styles F

-He attends church three times per week LO
-He leads and participates in short term mission trips LO
-He wants to be an Elder in the church A
-He is unmarried S

- First Question, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
- Second Question, what in this scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Scenario 3.B
I now have more information about this scenario:
-He identifies as straight ID
-He is a Nigerian immigrant and grew up as a farmer ID
-He lives in Salt Lake City, UT ID
-He dates on Hinge and Tinder and will sometimes spend the night with his dates LI
-He will go to the club on Friday and Saturday night with friends LI
-He occasionally drinks and partakes in medical marijuana for anxiety LI
-He does not tithe to any church F
-He does not participate in sabbath rest S

- First Question, Considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
- Second Question, Considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Key: (For follow up questions, not for interviewee)
ID – Identity or Culture (antonym: Mismatch)
C – Care Behavior or Morality (antonym: Harm)
LI – Liberty or Freedom Behavior or Morality (antonym: Oppression)
F – Fairness Behavior or Morality (antonym: Cheating)
LO – Loyalty Behavior or Morality (antonym: Betrayal)
A – Authority Behavior or Morality (antonym: Subversion)
S – Sanctity Behavior or Morality (antonym: Degradation)

Additional Questions:

1- Going back to decreased belonging,
   a. Why does this variable decrease a sense of belonging?
   b. Do these factors harm the community of faith? If so, how?
   c. Do these factors harm the individuals of faith? If so, how?
2- Would you like to add any additional thoughts regarding connectedness or belonging?

RESPONDENT F47

Interviewer: So, for data tracking purposes I'm conversing with respondent F47. Alright, are you ready?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Alright so I'm going to describe three scenarios, the following three scenarios describe different people who participate in their faith community. After each scenario I will ask the following two questions, one at a time. The first question, what in the scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? And the second question, what in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? Do you have any questions before we start?

Respondent: I think this isn't relevant but when I filled out the survey originally I was in a completely different area, like region and faith life, is that okay?

Interviewer: Oh yeah, absolutely. We've actually redone a lot of the research because Covid has changed the work, so I've had to redo all of my tests.

Respondent: Oh man.

Interviewer: No worries. We will do like a before and after so that's very helpful actually to see what's changed. Cool. So, scenario one I'm going to describe two people here. These individuals are a committed couple of ten years. They are married and do have a marriage license. They have one son. One individual is a teacher and one individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every week and they tithe 10%. They do not hold leadership positions in the church however they attend a small group every week. They participate in communion weekly and they show personal affection in public at church. So, based on that scenario and those factors, the first question, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: For them specifically?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And they belong to a group already?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: You want to know what would increase their involvement in their faith community?

Interviewer: Yeah kinda based off those factors, so out of the factors I listed which one of those, if any, would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community.

Respondent: Oh okay. I'm being kind of difficult here. But out of the things you listed, those aren't things that they're already doing?

Interviewer: They are.

Respondent: Oh, I get it. So, something that would increase their involvement in their community would be the faith group that they're a part of.

Interviewer: Okay, so that would make them feel like they're more connected or that they belong more to their church community.

Respondent: Yeah because that's the one thing that's specifically from their church and with a community of people.
Interviewer: Awesome. So, second question, is there anything in this scenario that would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: No.
Interviewer: Okay, awesome. I now have a little more personal information about this scenario. This couple is a lesbian couple, one woman is a Christian and one woman is not a Christian. Both women are white or Caucasian and they both want their son to be raised in a faith community. So based on the additional personal information, is there anything else in this scenario that would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Umm, connectedness to it, to a faith community, one person is Christian and one person is not. Or what's the other person?

Interviewer: They're not Christian.

Respondent: Oh, well, if somebody, it's based off the scenarios that you said?

Interviewer: Yep, absolutely.

Respondent: Ok, well, sorry I'm asking so many questions. I think it depends what denomination they're a part of, but depending on what denomination they're a part of the affection would probably make a lot of people uncomfortable, so that might decrease their sense of belonging in a faith community because people might not feel comfortable with that.

Interviewer: Would they not feel comfortable because of the personal affection or would they not feel comfortable with the personal affection because they're a lesbian couple?

Respondent: Because they're a lesbian couple.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. So, is there anything else that would decrease a sense of belonging in that scenario?

Respondent: So, I guess not in that scenario specifically, but if people were to comment on it or if they could sense the uncomfortableness then that would definitely decrease the sense of belonging.

Interviewer: Do you think people saying stuff in front of them, or saying stuff behind their back, or…

Respondent: Yeah that would for sure decrease their sense of belonging. Unless it was out of a place of love and they explained themselves and why they are thinking the way they are thinking. So, I think that's relative.

Interviewer: Yeah, that is relative. Thank you. So, second scenario, I will ask the same two questions following this scenario. In this scenario I am just going to describe one person. This person is 34 years old, she is a female, she is a dentist, she serves in the Navy Reserves. She is a classically trained piano player. She lives in New York City, New York. She works in public health to provide dental care to the homeless population. She tithes 10% of her dental and Navy income to the church and she is unmarried. So, the first question, what in this scenario, if anything, would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: The fact that she donates a lot of her money to the church, I think.

Interviewer: Okay. And the second question, what in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I'm sorry, can you read the scenario again?

Interviewer: Absolutely. This person is 34 years old; she is a female and a dentist. She serves in the Navy Reserves. She is a classically trained piano player. She lives in New York City, New York. She works in public health to provide dental care to the homeless. She tithes 10% of her dental and Navy income to the church and she is unmarried. So, the question would be what in this scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think it's kind of relative on the person she is, but I think that being single could maybe decrease it.
Interviewer: Okay, awesome.
Respondent: Final answer.
Interviewer: Alright. I do have more information about this scenario. She is an Asian-American and is adopted from Korea. She lives with her significant other but is unmarried. She attends two different churches, about one time per month to each church. She tithes 10% but only tithes to one of the churches that she attends. She hops between churches so she can play piano and serve on different worship teams. So, the first question, considering the additional personal information, is there anything that would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: Yeah, I think since she plays piano at the church services.
Interviewer: No worries. Second question, considering the additional personal information what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging or connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I don't know what other religions' philosophy is on cohabitating, but that might decrease her sense of belonging.
Interviewer: Ok, awesome, thank you. Now I have a third and final scenario and will ask the same two questions following this scenario. Scenario three: This person is a seminary student. This person is 28 years old and is a male. He is serving as a youth pastor at his local church. He teaches Sunday School to junior and senior high students. He highlights diversity in the church by introducing various worship styles. He attends church three times per week. He leads and participates in short term mission trips. He wants to be an elder in the church and he is unmarried. So, the first question, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: Ok, am I allowed to answer all of the above?
Interviewer: If you want to, yeah!
Respondent: Ok, all of the above.
Interviewer: That's awesome, that's the first time anybody has said that. Including being unmarried?
Respondent: Well, I have a question. I'm confused because I'm Catholic and when you're in the seminary you can't be married.
Interviewer: That's true, you are correct.
Respondent: I know in other ones you can be married.
Interviewer: I forgot you're on my list of Catholics. I'm interviewing a few different denominations, or I guess branches.
Interviewer: Cool. Is there anything in this scenario that would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness?
Respondent: I think, I don't think so. I feel like he's pretty solid.
Interviewer: Ok. I now have more information about this scenario. He identifies as straight. He is a Nigerian immigrant and grew up as a farmer. He lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. He must not be Catholic because he dates on Hinge and Tinder and will sometimes spend the night with his dates. He occasionally goes to a club on Friday or Saturday night with his friends. He occasionally drinks and partakes in medical marijuana for anxiety. He does not tithe to any church and he does not participate in Sabbath rest. So, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community, if anything?
Respondent: Ok, so he lives in Salt Lake City, Utah, is he Mormon? I feel like maybe his geographically placement could, because there's a higher chance that he could run into somebody that's also religious, but other than that I don't think so.
Interviewer: Ok, awesome. So, second question, considering the additional personal information, what in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: So, I would also have to say all of the above because I feel like he is contradicting. Is he Christian?
Interviewer: Yes.
Respondent: Okay, so no hate, I'm not even hating but I feel like he's just contradicting his religious beliefs so that might cause a moral dilemma in his head. I feel like I'm talking to a professor but I know you're not a professor so I don't have to be official and stuff.
Interviewer: No, you don't.
Respondent: Yeah so I'm going to have to say all of the above would decrease his involvement or what's the phrase again? Decrease.

Interviewer: Decrease a sense of belonging.
Respondent: Yeah.
Interviewer: Okay, awesome, thank you. So, I have a couple of follow up questions. Going back to some of the variables you mentioned that would decrease belonging, I heard singleness, maybe potentially depending on the denomination, personal affection, cohabitation, contradicting religious beliefs or moral dilemmas. So out of everything listed, why do these variables in particular decrease a sense of belonging?
Respondent: Because I think that it's not that anybody in the church would make him feel unwelcome based on those factors, but I think in his own mind or in their own mind I think there might be a sense of… Like if they know what they're doing isn't in line with their religion's teachings or with Christianity or whatever it may be, then I think they might feel a sense of guilt, subconsciously, so I think that's why.
Interviewer: Okay, awesome. When you're talking about the denominations in regards to the first scenario and the lesbian couple, why do you think certain variables impact certain denominations and not others? Why is that a variable in belonging?
Respondent: Yeah so I think that it's because it just depends on, I'm trying to think of a better word than rule, but the rules your denomination follows based on what they believe to be morally right or wrong. And so with that being said, if you know… I'll give an example. If you're Catholic, you know Catholics believe that it's immoral… This is so complicated, I mean it's not that complicated but… Ok Catholics believe for a number of reasons that its immoral to be gay or lesbian, so knowing that and still being Catholic might cause you to think subconsciously "Ok I'm Catholic, I'm Catholic, I follow all these rules but there's still that one thing that I'm not in line with." And so I think naturally you would kind of think do I really fully belong if I don't follow all of the rules. But if you're Christian, well Catholics are Christians, but if you're a Christian denomination that accepts homosexuality then you would be following in line with their rules and wouldn't have to worry or have anything to think about or be thinking "Oh I'm not following this rule" so you would feel like you belong.
Interviewer: No that helps a lot, thank you.
Respondent: But you can still belong if you're gay or homosexual in the Catholic church, you can still belong, just saying!
Interviewer: Ok! So, do these factors, the variables like singleness, cohabitation, being a lesbian, contradicting moral belief systems, do these factors harm the community of faith or do they harm the individuals of faith, and if they harm either how does that impact those groups or that individual?
Respondent: So, I think that if you call yourself a Christian but then you contradict what Christians believe, it can cause a, what's the phrase again?
Interviewer: Like to harm the community of faith or harm the individuals of faith?
Respondent: Yeah so it can harm in a sense the community of faith because outsiders then look at that community of faith and see it as hypocritical in a way. Because you don't want to say one thing and then do the other, so yeah. And then kind of hte same thing with individuals, like if you, is the question will it harm their faith?
Interviewer: Yes, the individual's faith.
Respondent: So yeah it's definitely going to harm their faith because if you're doing all of these things, it's kind of like a roadblock to, like it can be, I'm not saying that it will be but it can be a roadblock to diving deeper into your faith and reaching the full potential of your faith.

Interviewer: Awesome. Would you like to add any additional thoughts regarding connectedness or belonging?
Respondent: I think that there's a place for everybody in the church no matter what denomination you are and no matter what lifestyle you're living, it doesn't matter. I feel like I'm contradicting myself but I'm just going to say this anyway. I really truly believe that every single person, I'm going to sound really Catholic here but every single person, saint or sinner, has a place in the church and they belong, and people are going to or should accept you no matter what because that's what Jesus would do but it's gonna, the things you choose to do are going to harm you and your ability to be loved by… Dang it I'm sorry I'm being so awkward, and your ability to know the love of Christ more than its going to harm anybody else. So, the Lord knows you and loves you, period. But the only thing that's stopping you from getting that love is you. So, you just have to accept it. It's right there in front of you but you just have to accept it and sometimes our lifestyle decisions inhibit us from accepting it. Ok that's all.
Interviewer: Sorry just a quick follow up to that. You used the phrase saint or sinner, how do people who fall into the category of sinner find their place in the church?
Respondent: Ok so we're all sinners.
Interviewer: Ok.
Respondent: So, we're all sinners, it's just I guess that is just like a… Yeah so we're all sinners and we all find our place in the church and how do we find it? The church, the people who have a… This is hard because it's kind of like on a spectrum. But people who are "in the church" and I put quotes around that because I feel like we're all a part of the church, it's just a matter of being active members of it. So, I would say the people who are active members of the church, it's kind of like their job to reach out to people who aren't active members of the church and show them, wow this is really biased, but show them the goodness of the church and the love of Jesus. So that's how the people who are sinners, and oh my gosh I'm just going to keep talking because I don't know how to describe this but… The people who are sinners, to get into the church, but we're all sinners, even the people who are in the church, it's just a matter of how active you are in your faith. I'm sorry this really isn't making any sense.
Interviewer: It is.
Respondent: And saint, I would say a saint is… we're all working towards being a saint but I would say none of us actually are saints, it's just something that we're striving towards being. Sorry if that's not making sense.
Interviewer: No, it is. Awesome, well thank you so much for your time I really appreciate it, if you think of anything else feel free to reach out.
Respondent: Thank you for your time, I know I talk a lot so I appreciate it.
Interviewer: The more you talk the more helpful it is for me, so it's perfect.

RESPONDENT F45

Interviewer: For tracking purposes I am now conversing with respondent F45. Alright, the following three scenarios will describe people who participate in their faith community. After each scenario I will ask the following questions, one at a time. The first question will be what in the scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? And the second question will be what in this scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? Do you have any questions before we start?

Respondent: No, I think I got it.

Interviewer: Okay, there's no right or wrong answer, it's not like school. This is a lot easier. Alright so the first scenario. I am going to describe a couple people here. These individuals are a committed couple of ten years. They are married and have a marriage license. They have one son. One individual is a teacher and one individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every week. They tithe 10%. They do not hold leadership positions in the church. They attend a small group weekly. They participate in communion weekly and they show personal affection in public at church. So, the first question, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I guess that they go to church weekly, so they're talking to other people and that they go, what was the last one again? That they show personal affection to others? Yeah, so if they show personal affection to others maybe that makes them more connected. The only thing, not that there's anything wrong with it, but the only thing that seems like it wouldn't help was that they weren't leading a Bible study but I don't really think that's hurting their family if they're going to one.

Interviewer: So, you would say that decreases their sense of belonging? That they aren't leading?

Respondent: Well, I feel like none of that really decreases. Can I say that? I don't think anything you said will decrease it.

Interviewer: Alright, great. I now have some more information about this scenario. This couple is a lesbian couple, one woman is a Christian and one woman is not a Christian. Both women are white or Caucasian. They want their son to be raised in a faith community. So back to the first question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: What increases?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: I guess the same thing, that they're going to Bible study, I didn't say that the first time, but that they're going to Bible study and that they're going to Church, talking to people, showing affection. What would decrease it? I don't know. I mean I guess if it's like a Catholic

church obviously if they're openly gay then I feel like that might make them feel alienated in some ways I could see, just because of what the church teaches with that, but I guess that's not really their actions so much as how other people might see them.

Interviewer: Okay. Is there anything else that you think decreases their sense of belonging or connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I don't think so.

Interviewer: Awesome. Now I have a second scenario and I will ask the same two questions following this scenario. Scenario two, this person is 34 years old. She's a single female. She's a dentist. She serves in the Navy Reserves. She is a classically trained piano player. She lives in New York City, New York. She works in public health to provide dental care to the homeless. She tithes 10% of her dental and Navy income to the church. She is unmarried. So, the first question again, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think the only thing I can remember that's related to the church is that she tithes, so maybe that but also I don't see if she's just giving money to church if that would really contribute to the community.

Interviewer: Okay. Does anything in this scenario decrease a sense of belonging or connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: No, not that I can think of.

Interviewer: Okay, great. I now have more information about this scenario. She is an Asian-American and is adopted from Korea. She lives with her significant other. She attends two different churches about one time per month each. She tithes 10% but only tithes to one of the churches she attends. She hops between churches so she can play piano and serve on different worship teams. So, considering the additional information, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Yeah that she's serving at both of the churches and she seems like she's involved and she's tithing, but then what might be taking away from that is I guess if she's going to two different churches that might, I don't know, that she's not, I don't know if they're different types of churches or what denominations they are but maybe that might be confusing. Just when it comes to what each church teaches and then being loyal to one and having a strong belief that one is right or that one isn't, that could again maybe make her feel kinda alienated from one or the other.

Interviewer: Okay. Is there anything else from the personal information that would decrease her sense of belonging or connectedness?

Respondent: Not off the top of my head.

Interviewer: Okay, great. Now I have a third and final scenario and will ask the same two questions as before. This person is a seminary student. This person is 28 years old and is a male. He is serving as a youth pastor at his local church. He teaches Sunday School to junior and senior high students. He highlights diversity in the church by introducing various Gospel worship styles. He attends church three times per week. He leads and participates in short term mission trips. He wants to be an elder in the church. He is unmarried. First question, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: That he's a youth leader and he goes on mission trips. And I think you said something about him teaching, like highlighting diversity in the church so maybe that might help some people that don't feel like they fit in, fit in. And the things that don't help… Yeah I can't think of anything.

Interviewer: Okay. I now have more information about this scenario. He does identify as straight. He is a Nigerian immigrant and grew up as a farmer. He lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. He dates on Hinge and Tinder and will sometimes spend the night with his dates. He'll go to a club on Friday or Saturday night with friends. He occasionally drinks and partakes in medical marijuana for anxiety. He does not tithe to any church and he does not participate in Sabbath rest. Considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I guess if he, you know it's hard to feel that you fit in somewhere if you're not following everything that an organization teaches, I guess. So yeah, if he's not, if he's going on dates and sleeping over with people and smoking and stuff. I mean if no one knows maybe he can still be friends with them and stuff but I guess I feel like he would just kind of resent everything that's being taught in some way. I don't see how he could feel like he's fitting in, but then oh, I did it backwards.

Interviewer: That's okay.

Respondent: He could feel like he fits in, he's a youth director and he's talking to people and spending time with them so he still has that, I guess.

Interviewer: Okay, great. So going back to some of the things you mentioned about decreasing belonging, in the first scenario you talked about the couple being openly gay, in the second scenario you talked about the woman going to different churches, in the third scenario you are talking about some of the lifestyle things regarding going on dates and participating in drugs or alcohol. You've already touched a little bit on this, but why do these variables decrease a sense of belonging?

Respondent: Because if you're part of an organization that's teaching something that you're doing and it doesn't make you feel good, it kind of makes you feel, I guess, bad about yourself and bad about what you're doing, so you kind of start thinking maybe I don't belong here, maybe this isn't for me.

Interviewer: Do you think that these variables or factors harm the community of faith, and if they do, how?

Respondent: Like what they did?

Interviewer: The things that we kind of just talked about that decrease belonging, do you think those variables harm a community of faith?

Respondent: Like do I think that what they're doing is…

Interviewer: Not good for the community at large.

Respondent: I guess if you feel deep down that you don't belong somewhere then you're not going to be able to, you know, like contribute or give everything that you have and do it with all of the love that you could if you don't really feel like you fit in.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. Do you want to add any additional thoughts regarding connectedness or belonging?

Respondent: No, I'm good.

Interviewer: Ok, awesome. I really appreciate your time.

RESPONDENT D53

Interviewer: For data tracking purposes I am conversing with respondent D53. So, I have three scenarios where I will describe people who participate in their faith community or a faith community. After each scenario I will ask the following questions, one at a time. The first question, what in the scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? And the second question is what in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? Do you have any questions before we start?

Respondent: Nope, sounds simple enough.

Interviewer: Seems pretty simple, right? It is, there's no right or wrong answer so it's super easy. Alright, scenario one, I am going to describe a couple of individuals here. These individuals are a committed couple of ten years. They are married with a marriage license. They have one son. One individual is a teacher and one individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every week. They tithe 10%. They do not hold leadership positions in the church. They attend a small group every week. They participate in communion weekly and they show personal affection in public at church. So, the first question, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: In terms of making them feel like they belong?

Interviewer: Yes. Does anything in that scenario stand out to you as a factor that would increase their sense of belonging?

Respondent: Yeah, I mean they might not be leaders in the church but that doesn't mean they're not leaders in the community. I think sometimes that's valuable in itself because, just because you're not a leader in the church doesn't mean you can't contribute elsewhere. Maybe that's more, you don't want to, you can't be overly busy and still be effective so I don't think that should be looked down upon at all. And they still have a routine small group that they attend so it sounds like they make a pretty good work/life balance between everything that they have going on but still being pretty connected with the church, seems like they go pretty routinely.

Interviewer: Awesome. Second question, what in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I really didn't hear anything glaring, I would hope that the church, is there anything in the scenario that says how long they've been with the church? I know it says they've been married ten years or so.

Interviewer: No, nothing about how long they've been in the church.

Respondent: Ok, yeah I mean I would hope that even if they have been there ten plus years they're not looked down upon for not holding leadership positions and they give their 10%. So that would be my only minor concern, they've been going there 10-15 years and they haven't stepped up to the plate for anything so I hope they may be highlighted even just once a year what they're doing for the community with the orphans.

Interviewer: Awesome. I now have more information about this scenario. The couple described above is a lesbian couple. One woman is a Christian and one woman is not a Christian. Both women are white or Caucasian. They want their son to be raised in a faith community. So, the first question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Yeah I mean what would increase it is just having like, that small group should help foundationally so they shouldn't feel like they're out when they show up at church and even just seeing one or two people that greet you on the way in or saying hi to someone on the way out goes a long way. If you didn't have a small group that might be, you might naturally feel a little more judged in that situation, a little more alone and have a hard time motivating yourself to go on a weekly basis so that's where I think small groups really help out, whether you have a very different situation or not. I think they rightfully, especially without that small group, would feel like the odd ones out, unfortunately.

Interviewer: Okay. Considering the additional personal information, does anything in this scenario decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Yeah I mean it really depends on, I think a lot of non-denominational churches have gotten pretty good at being inclusive in that regard, but if they were going to maybe a more traditional church it's not for certain that they'd be I guess looked down upon but naturally you'd suspect there's a higher potential of it. It really depends on how traditional the church is or not, and I should say "traditional".

Interviewer: Awesome. Now I have a second scenario and I will ask the same two questions following this scenario. Scenario two, this person is 34 years old. She is a female; she is a dentist. She serves in the Naval Reserves. She is a classically trained piano player. She lives in New York City, New York. She works in public health to provide dental care to the homeless. She tithes 10% of her dental and Navy income to the church. She is unmarried. So, the first question being what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Yeah I mean I think just small groups to keep that connection, especially they mentioned she's still in the Navy correct?

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent. Okay. I suspect, I mean I have friends in the military right now and the ones that are and aren't in a small group it's hard for them to come back to a church really because not everybody knows their situation, one, and when they come back it's refreshing to have that small group and those people that can motivate you to go and see those faces again. Without that it's hard to get up on a Sunday morning and go to a place where people look at you like "Oh yeah, we saw you five months ago, where have you been?" And then understandably this individual might have been off training or every month or so they need to go to a different state or every year go to a different country just for their duty to the Navy so I think having some form of a small group in that situation would be especially beneficial and like I've said I've seen that in real life too.

Interviewer: Great. Is there anything else in this scenario that decreases a sense of belonging?

Respondent: Decrease, yeah. Potentially, I mean, it sounds like they tithe which is good but, I just imagine being detached from a church for even a couple weeks at a time can make things tough. I think a lot of people have even seen that with Covid.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Routine is good sometimes, especially with something like that. I mean it's almost like a paradox because you're in the Navy, which is very routine, routine but you want to make church a routine but your schedule says otherwise. That can make it especially tough too, just having a schedule that you just don't really know about so it's hard to commit anything directly to the church outside of the 10%.

Interviewer: Cool. I now have more information on this scenario. The individual above, she is an Asian-American and is adopted from Korea. She lives with her significant other. She attends two different churches about one time per month each. She tithes 10% but only tithes to one of the churches she attends. She hops between churches so she can play piano and serve on different worship teams. Considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Yeah I mean I think the 10% piece, we might all be in different vehicles but we're all going towards the same destination. I do think there might be pressure there though, like she might play piano for us on Sundays but we also know that she gives quite a bit more financially to this other church that she's going to once a month. Why doesn't she split it up both ways, 5% here and 5% there, so from a leadership standpoint I don't think things, I'd like to think things don't get too political but it might when it comes to that regard. The unfortunate reality is that's just how churches survive nowadays is that tithing process and those contributions so I think things could tend to get a little bit dicey there. That'd probably be the biggest call out just because you could put a number to it.

Interviewer: And you think that would be a factor that would increase?

Respondent: I think that would decrease-

Interviewer: Depending on the church maybe?

Respondent: I think it would increase for the first one but probably the decrease would overweigh the increase for the first one that she isn't tithing to.

Interviewer: Okay. Considering the additional personal information, is there anything else that decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Can you actually repeat it real quickly?

Interviewer: Yeah, sure, easy. She is an Asian-American and is adopted from Korea. She lives with her significant other. She attends two different churches about one time per month each. She tithes 10% but only tithes to one of the churches she attends. She hops between churches so she can play piano and serve on different worship teams.

Respondent: I know depending on what church you're at and how traditional they are it's not, I guess, ideal to live with your significant other so there could be some judgment there. And I don't know how that would, that might just come up in conversations that you have directly or… I don't think it's necessarily leadership's job to get in the middle of that, but it leaves the door open for a lot of, just drama for lack of a better word as well, whether it be Biblical or just hearsay.

Interviewer: Great. Now I have a third and final scenario and will ask the same two questions following this scenario. This person is a seminary student. This person is 28 years old and is a male. He is serving as a youth pastor at his local church. He teaches Sunday School to junior and

senior high students. He highlights diversity in the church by introducing various Gospel worship styles. He attends church three times per week. He leads and participates in short term mission trips. He wants to be an elder in the church. He is unmarried. So, first question, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Yeah I think it's good that, especially middle school high school they just get a diversity of thought. Sounds like he really tries to highlight that and it sounds like it's speaking from experience, not just research he's found elsewhere because he is going on those mission trips. It sounds like he's really genuinely has the time for everything he's putting into the church and has an angle which is I think very ideal, especially in a spiritual community it's always hard to find where the next steps are and it sounds like he has those pretty well outlined.

Interviewer: What in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: This might be ignorance on my side but I have heard from a couple different individuals that those short term missions trips aren't ideal, they almost do more harm than they do good depending on how those trips are so we need more information about the missions trips themselves but sometimes when you go into these communities you use a lot of their resources and they don't know how to maintain them over time so it actually puts them in a worse place a year later than it would be otherwise before the mission trip individuals come in and you really want to make sure your intent behind the reason to come in is not to travel, it's to serve and share the Gospel. So that would probably be my biggest blatant concern right there. Yeah, I mean, that one in particular.

Interviewer: Okay, great. I now have more information about this scenario. He identifies as straight. He is a Nigerian immigrant and grew up as a farmer. He lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. He dates on Hinge and Tinder and will sometimes spend the night with his dates. He'll go to a club on Friday or Saturday night with friends. He occasionally drinks and partakes in medical marijuana for anxiety. He does not tithe to any church and he does not participate in Sabbath rest. First question, considering the additional personal information, what in the scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think it's good that the church still accepts him, probably a lot of the members knowing that he's at least going out partying to some extent. I think it's almost more important, not more important, but it's just as important to make those individuals to feel included as somebody that is very much by the Bible and going to church every Sunday. I think that's quite frankly where there's probably the most opportunity to grow churches in general is reaching out to individuals like that so I think it's good the church still supports him with all that information in mind. My concern would probably come up when, if you have middle schoolers and high schoolers obviously that's a point in your life when you really start getting those peer pressure situations and it's like "Oh, I see my youth pastor out here or my group leader out here, three sheets to the wind, then what's the big deal if I have a beer or if that becomes partying every weekend just like the youth pastor.

Interviewer: Just like the youth pastor!

Respondent: Yeah, don't be afraid to bring that up necessarily in service. Say like hey once you're of age you need to be responsible, like I still go out and have fun every weekend but I make sure I draw the line here, here, and here. I'm not really too concerned about the partying but probably the biggest concern would be just bringing people back home after a single date. I think even church aside, that's just not something that's morally healthy to do.

Interviewer: Great. Is there any additional personal information from the scenario that would decrease a sense of belonging or connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Yeah, I think I ran through most of it already. Yeah, really nothing else to really add.

Interviewer: Awesome. So going back to a few of the factors that you mentioned that decrease a sense of belonging- I know that you mentioned it depends on the church, maybe not being recognized, work/life balance, transience, small groups, concern over modeling behavior. Why do these variables decrease a sense of belonging?

Respondent: Yeah I mean, again depending on the church, but they should, I think the expectation is that you have this like perfect life outside of church and don't do anything wrong and you almost don't feel like you should use church as a resource to improve that, you almost want to avoid those on Sunday morning rather than confront them directly. I think that's just a natural human reaction to something like that, it's just the idea of shame. When you go to a church you feel shame rather than support so I think that's the biggest, I've seen that in real life too, that really determines how long somebody stays at a church versus they look elsewhere or resent going to church altogether.

Interviewer: Do you think these factors, these variable factors that decrease a sense of belonging harm the community of faith?

Respondent: Yeah I think so, I generally think it's gotten better. As somebody who was initially Catholic until I was about a teenager then I was a non-denominational Christian, it's been good to see people that are of all walks of life, whether they grew up going to Sunday school or didn't attend a church until they were 25, to see those individuals be accepted at a place of worship. I do think they're maybe improving on saying it's okay that you're maybe have an atypical, traditional relationship or it's okay that you go out in the week or on the weekend and do X, Y, or Z, we still want to be here to support you and not completely change who you are.

Interviewer: So, you think that it's almost made the communities, the communities that are willing to accept the variables that normally decrease a sense of belonging, it actually helps those communities? Those churches?

Respondent: It helps them but I don't think they're, I mean I think this has to do with members of the church too, they don't do a good enough, maybe not a good enough job of enforcing how far some of those churches have come along and just accepting those individuals.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you think that if a church doesn't accept those individuals, it hurts their church? From a faith perspective?

Respondent: I think consistency is key, you can be consistent and still be very open to other individuals. So, you, that's where it's a really tough line to follow. You still want to be mindful of traditional-minded individuals and just really have discussions about both points of view, if you will. And that's where I think you start seeing people get pushed out on the other end of things, they have very conservative views and you go to a church and it's very progressive minded which is good to get people in the door but you might be pushing the other side out the door as well. So just being very minded of both sides of the argument, and I think that's for the individual to determine their opinion and their thoughts but being able to provide really both sides is beneficial as a whole, that way those people that have maybe been going to that church for 30 or 40 years don't feel like things are changing for the worst just because they were raised very differently, they just see it as hey this is what the younger generation thinks, that's actually pretty similar to how we thought 30 or 40 years ago, this is just what we've grown up into, maybe we've changed our mind on some of it but maybe some of the other stuff we're pretty still near and dear to our hearts and church sees both sides of that.

Interviewer: Okay, cool. Would you like to add any additional thoughts regarding connectedness or belonging?

Respondent: Nope. Small groups, I think that's-

Interviewer: You think that's the answer?

Respondent: I think that's the answer to a lot of these things, yeah.

Interviewer: And you did kind of talk about that a little bit, what is it about small groups that helps people feel like they belong?

Respondent: Yeah I mean it's intimidating to some extent. The hardest thing I've ever been to alone is a church service. That's just tough, it shouldn't be, but for whatever reason that's like one of the most, awkward isn't even the way to put it but just off putting environments to be in when you don't have that small group but it's also, church is also one of the easiest things to go to when you do have a small group and some level of support so I think it's just what makes you keep coming back are those relationships. You can go to any church and have a relationship with God but you can't go to any church and have a relationship with the people.

Interviewer: Well awesome, thank you for your time, I'm going to go ahead and stop the recording.

RESPONDENT F49

Interviewer: Awesome, so for data tracking purposes I am conversing with respondent F49. Alright, I am going to describe three scenarios of people who participate in their faith

community. After each of these scenarios I will ask the following two questions. The first question will be what in the scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? And the second question will be what in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? Do you have any questions before I start?

Respondent: No, but someone just came into my house I think to tour it, can you hear that?

Interviewer: No, you're all good.

Respondent: They might come into my room.

Interviewer: That's totally fine, no worries. Alright so the first scenario I am going to describe a couple of individuals here. These individuals are a committed couple. They've been together for ten years. They are married and have a marriage license. They have one son. One individual is a teacher and one individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every week. They tithe 10%. They do not hold leadership positions in the church. They attend a small group every week. They participate in communion every week and they show personal affection in public at church. So, the first question would be what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Sorry, out of the things you listed?

Interviewer: Yeah so based on those variables, is there anything that stands out as a factor that might help someone feel like they belong or feel like they're connected while in their faith community.

Respondent: Okay, I feel like attending the church every week and I think you said a small group, something like that, and just having the family involved in different ministries at the church.

Interviewer: Okay. So, second question, what in the scenario, if anything, would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think, kind of like the opposite, being involved or being involved in other places so I think you said they have a kid so if they're really involved with other things that can take them out of the community, like "Oh I can't do this this week, I have to go somewhere."

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. I now have more personal information on this scenario. This couple is a lesbian couple, one woman is a Christian and one woman is not a Christian. Both women are white or Caucasian and they both want their son to be raised in a Christian faith community. So, the first question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario, if anything, would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think the desire to want to raise the child in a faith community is what would help them connect to other people. Also, I think just depending on what church they're attending I think their race could play a factor in that because they may find people who think like them and grew up like them.

Interviewer: Okay. So, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging or connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think since they're lesbians, I think that could affect it. Especially depending on, there are some types of Christian denominations that are more kind of saying it's ok while others don't so I think that could have a big effect on it.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome, thanks. Now I have a second scenario and I will ask the same two questions following this scenario. This person is 34 years old, she's a female and a dentist. She serves in the Navy Reserves. She is a classically trained piano player. She lives in New York City, New York. She works in public health to provide dental care to the homeless. She tithes 10% of her dental and Navy income to the church. She is unmarried. So, the first question, what in this scenario increases the sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: She seems involved with tithing and maybe, I know she helps serve the homeless, she could get involved with ministries through that, and maybe if she's taking care of patients who go to that church she'll have a connection through that way to meet people there. And I also think being a woman she can get involved in different ministries through that.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. So, second question, what in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: You said she was 34 right?

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: So, I think maybe being 34 and single, I think a lot of people tend to be married at that age and tend to want to hang out with other couples, so being single could kind of take away from how she grows with other people. And being a pianist and in the Navy and a dentist takes a lot of time so I don't know how involved she would be able to be with a faith community.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. I now have more information about this scenario. She is Asian-American and is adopted from Korea. She lives with her significant other. She attends two different churches about one time per month each. She tithes 10% but only tithes to one of the churches she attends. She hops between churches so she can play piano and serve on worship teams. So, the first question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think since she's active in the music ministry in both churches, that's something that people would recognize her so she can be more involved in that way. And I think depending on the type of church she goes to, kind of like with the last question, race especially with a city

like New York can be a big influencer on who goes to a certain type of church, so if she's involved in a church where people maybe look like her more, she might feel more of a belonging in the community.

Interviewer: Awesome. So, second question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think since she's switching back and forth between the churches that can be hard since they're only seeing her every other week since she's missing half of what happens in the church. I think maybe living with her significant other unmarried could cause people to kind of raise questions and they might not think the same of her because of that.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome, thanks. Now I have a third and final scenario and will ask the same two questions following this scenario. In scenario three, this person is a seminary student. This person is 28 years old and is a male. He is serving as a youth pastor at his local church. He teaches Sunday School to junior and senior high students. He highlights diversity in the church by introducing various worship styles. He attends church three times per week, or mass. He leads and participates in short term mission trips. He wants to be an elder in the church and he is unmarried. So, first question: What in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community.

Respondent: Yeah so he seems really involved with his church, he's in seminary, and is a youth pastor so I think all of those things and also attending a church service multiple times a week I think gets you really involved and you'll meet people through that and be able to be involved in more things because people will recognize you and ask you to join things. I think all those things, and even the mission trips, everything he kind of does with the church, being able to serve allows him to meet people more.

Interviewer: Awesome. So, the second question, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think something that could come up, since he tries to introduce a bunch of different types of worship services, people might disagree with him and so they might not feel as connected with him in that way. And if he's always away leading mission trips or something, just like him not being present there might not let him connect with people as much.

Interviewer: Awesome. I now have more information on this scenario. The individual above, he identifies as straight. He is a Nigerian immigrant and grew up as a farmer. He lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. He sometimes will date on Hinge or Tinder and will sometimes spend the night with his dates. He'll occasionally go to a club on Friday or Saturday night with his friends. He will occasionally drink and occasionally partake in medical marijuana for anxiety. He does not tithe to any church and he does not participate in Sabbath rest. So, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Um, I really can't think of anything.

Interviewer: Okay, no worries. Second question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I'm not sure like what type of church he would be at, but I know Utah and Salt Lake City is very LDS centered so I think some of the things he does would alienate him from other people who are attending his church, so like going out and using medical marijuana. Even just the demographics in Utah are more white, non-immigrant types of people and he, I think, would stick out a little more in Utah with the populations there.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. Thank you. I have a couple of follow up questions for you since we made it through the scenarios. So going back to some of the variables that you mentioned that would decrease a sense of belonging, and feel free to correct me, I kind of heard race, singleness and age, time, presence, sexuality, lack of sameness or introducing into the environment. So, these variables that decrease a sense of belonging, why do these variables in particular, out of everything we discussed, decrease a sense of belonging?

Respondent: Yeah so in terms of age, and race, and gender, I think they can decrease just based on the populations you're with. People tend to want to hang out and be around people who are more like them, so if you're coming into a community and you're not like that it can be harder to be accepted. And I don't think it always happens intentionally, I think it could be like, in terms of age and being unmarried, it's like "Let's go out for a couple's night" and then if you're not married then it's kind of like "What should I do?" in that situation. Or on a college campus, I know some grad students and some of them are older so some will be 20, or 30, and then it's like trying to interact with an 18-year-old and it's a different type of environment.

Interviewer: That's true.

Respondent: And like, yeah in general I think people like to be around people who are more like them so when someone has something that's different it's easier to see those differences than all the other things that are the same that you also agree with. Especially when they're external things, I think most of those factors were external things that you could see than things like tithing and praying stuff on your own.

Interviewer: Yeah that is interesting. So, on that note of factors you can see, in the third scenario when we're talking about the guy who introduces different worship styles, you said that might cause some tension when it comes to belonging. Why is it that when someone introduces something different than the normal that would decrease a sense of belonging?

Respondent: I think especially if it's someone new coming in to the environment and changing things, sometimes people choose a church for a certain reason, like "Oh I like the liturgical style of this church or the feel of it" and then having people change it, they might not, they may feel distant like "You don't understand me, or why I'm here and what I'm doing." So, I think that's why I said that, because there can be a disconnect between what you think you're doing and

helping and what people actually feel about the situation, and so it, I don't know where I was going with that.

Interviewer: It's all good. Awesome. In regards to race and sexuality, we kind of talked about depending on the church that you attend, why does it, why is the denomination or the type of church a variable in feeling connected?

Respondent: I think it comes more from my personal experience because I was raised Baptist in Florida and it's a very different feel there where my family was the only black family and then when I went to high school in Arizona and this church was like all black families, and so it's not that I didn't feel accepted in either place, it's just like you can definitely feel the difference, more than the style, but you're made aware when you're the person that sticks out of that. And then when I became Catholic I'm typically one of the only black people within the churches and so I think, can you repeat the question?

Interviewer: Yeah, why does the type of church impact the sense of connection?

Respondent: So just like the different beliefs that happen in the church, and it's not like one church is more for a race, but in certain terms of sexuality, different types of groups are more leaning towards traditional versus modern beliefs on sexuality and stuff. I don't know how to describe it. Newer maybe is the word, but not really, kind of types of Christianity, like a more new age feel, I think typically is more willing to change their kind of mind and beliefs of what's happening and so I think that's why it can change with churches.

Interviewer: Ok. So that feeling you described of awareness that you're different or that you stick out from like the church in Florida to the church in Arizona, can you talk about that a little more? What is that feeling you were having, that made you feel like you were maybe, like you stuck out?

Respondent: So, I didn't really feel it that much in Florida because that's what I was used to, I didn't know any different. I think I was made more aware of what happened when I moved to Arizona and started going to this church and it was all black people and I didn't realize, I was just raised where white was normal but I also didn't see myself, like I knew I wasn't white but I didn't see myself sticking out from that, if that makes sense. I think, I just, it kinda felt, that was also the age where I started to become more aware of race, I was ten or eleven, before I was eight and under, but now I realize it more but I also don't necessarily think I stand out because I was just kind of raised in that type of environment so it doesn't affect me as much.

Interviewer: Did you feel like you connected or belonged more in Arizona than you do now in your Catholic church?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: You feel you belong and connect better in the Catholic church?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Respondent: The thing about the Catholic church is it's universal, and so there, I mean it also depends on where you live and who is going to be represented in the church. I understand that I live in a predominantly white community so that's what's represented in the church but I also know when I travel to other places it's not just one group of people in the church, it's a bunch of different groups of people and we all come together in this shared belief of Jesus Christ and so I think that it just makes me feel more like I belong, less about race and more about what I believe and being accepted for what I believe and just having that shared love of Christ. Whereas with the other church, I was going because my parents made me go to that church, and I didn't have that same belief so even if I looked the same as everybody else I don't think the same or feel the same so it's just different.

Interviewer: Awesome. So, these factors that might create barriers to belonging, do they harm the community of faith or the individuals of faith, and if they do, how?

Respondent: I think they kind of harm everyone because I think individuals are hurt when they feel left out, and I think churches are hurt because they lose the opportunity to learn about other people who maybe are different from themselves. It's kind of hard to have the distinction between wanting to accept you for who you are while also maintaining your beliefs, like "We love you but we don't have to agree on everything or think the exact same as you," but still love and accept people. I think kind of having those things where certain groups are more likely to feel unwelcome in Christian, in any type of Christian churches, then I think we kind of lose an opportunity to learn about other people and to just grow and be more loving neighbors.

Interviewer: I know I'm asking lots of extra questions. How do you think we can be better, more loving neighbors in today's world?

Respondent: Yeah I think it's important to just listen to people because I think it's kind of instinctual to tell people about what you and what you believe in, but it's also important, even if you know what you believe, like I know I'm not going to change my fundamental beliefs especially in regards to faith and just kind of church teachings, but just being able to hear people and understand, like they might be understanding something differently from what we're saying and so this might be hurting them in ways we don't understand. So it's like "Oh yeah I think this is fine" but you don't know how it's affecting somebody else or someone who was raised differently, to understand that not everyone has the same background as you, and just hearing what they have to offer because I think a lot of times we're talking about the same things just differently which makes it kind of hard to see our similarities when we just see the differences in those similarities.

Interviewer: Awesome, would you like to add any additional thoughts regarding connectedness or belonging?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Awesome.

RESPONDENT N21

Interviewer: For tracking purposes I am conversing with respondent N21. So, I'm going to describe three scenarios, describing people who participate in their faith community. After each of those scenarios I will ask two questions, one at a time. The first question will be what in the scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? And the second question will be what in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? Do you have any questions? Alright. It's pretty easy, no wrong answers.

Respondent: Alright. Those are always the best.

Interviewer: Alright, scenario one. I am going to describe two people here. These individuals are a committed couple of ten years. They are married and have a marriage license. They have one son. One individual is a teacher and one individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every week. They tithe 10%. They do not hold leadership positions in the church. They attend a small group every week. They participate in communion every week and they show personal affection in public at church. So, the first question, based on that scenario, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: That's a good question. So, you said, sorry, was the second to last thing you said they take communion every week? Is that what you said?

Interviewer: Yes, good memory.

Respondent: Ok, I just wanted to make sure. They're involved in a bible study, they go to church every week, they have a son. And then the question is what could increase belonging in this faith community?

Interviewer: Yes. In this scenario.

Respondent: Yeah I think, I think what could increase a sense of belonging, so they're going to church, going to Bible study, but I think outside of those times, whether it's dinners or on the weekend, finding time to either invite over or go over to other people's homes in the church can create a sense of belonging, you're not just going to an event but now you're building relationships within the church and relationships really is what helps people feel they belong to something, like a true deeper belonging, not just like "Yeah, I go to this church," but people are more committed when there are relationships involved.

Interviewer: So, the second question, what in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think what could decrease it is, and it's obvious but if they stopped going to Bible study, or stopped going to church, I think that for sure would decrease belonging in that. And another challenge could be having a son, if they get really involved in sports or something like that, that requires them to travel a lot, that keeps them separated from people more often, like they start missing church a lot more or Bible study or something like that, that could also decrease a sense of belonging.

Interviewer: Awesome, thank you. I now have more information about this scenario. This couple is a lesbian couple. One woman is a Christian and one woman is not a Christian. Both women are white or Caucasian and they both want their son to be raised in a faith community. So, the first question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I'm so sorry, can you say the beginning part of that? Someone was calling me and so it was like, I was getting the ringing sound.

Interviewer: Sure, that's funny. I have more information about this scenario. This couple is a lesbian couple. One woman is a Christian and one woman is not a Christian. Both women are white or Caucasian and they want their son to be raised in a faith community. So, the first question would be, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: It's a good question. I think, like I think before, involvement will increase belonging. I think it also depends on what the church's beliefs are when it comes to same sex marriage, so with the lesbian couple, so yeah depending on the church that can vary how belonging they feel. And so, yeah, feels like a tough one to answer. Yeah, I think it depends on the faith community they're involved in and kind of what their belief sets are, but I think whatever that may be, I think still the same is true, as they spend time with people and stuff like that, that I think will increase belonging for sure.

Interviewer: So, the second question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Besides kind of how I answered before, not going to things or stuff like that, I think for people to see that they're a lesbian couple and that they use hate speach or stuff like that, that can definitely cause a sense of not belonging or discourage belonging, for sure.

Interviewer: Great, thank you. Alright, second scenario, this person is 34 years old. She is a female. She is a dentist. She serves in the Navy Reserves. She is a classically trained piano player. She lives in New York City, New York. She works in public health to provide dental care to the homeless. She tithes 10% of her dental and Navy income to the church and she is unmarried. So, the first question, what in this scenario increases the sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Yeah, I think a sense of belonging will come from the ability, potentially the ability to use her talents and play the piano at church, to be more involved, that'll create more of a sense

of belonging. I think also reaching out to other people to develop friendships and people reaching out to her as well to develop friendships, once again I think creates a sense of belonging for sure.

Interviewer: Awesome. What in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Yeah I think getting, I mean doing a lot, getting wrapped up in work, because I'm sure, well I'm not sure all that's involved with being in the Reserves but I imagine with that other stuff, being really involved can decrease, can decrease both a sense of belonging. But then I think also being a single woman, if she's just looked past or if the singles aren't thought about well in that church or that faith community, could create or discourage a sense of belonging. If marriage was the goal and having kids was the goal, and if you're not in that group you haven't obtained what you needed to obtain type of deal.

Interviewer: Awesome, thanks. So I do have more information about this scenario. She is an Asian-American and is adopted from Korea. She lives with her significant other. She attends two different churches about one time per month each. She tithes 10% but only tithes to one of the churches she attends. She hops between churches so she can play piano and serve on different worship teams. So the first question would be considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Yeah, committing to one of the churches would increase a sense of belonging rather than jumping from one to the other and only once a month each. Just by committing to one place and saying this is my family, this is my church body, this is where I'll dive in and plug in, that would definitely create a sense of belonging because then she's just able to form relationships there. It's hard to form relationships if you only go to one place, or church one time, and also she's playing piano, so even then she's distract-, not distracted; but like, she's doing something so she probably shows up a little earlier and then she's already on stage so there's other factors within that that would discourage being somewhere. So, I would say by committing to one place.

Interviewer: Great. Considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging or connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Yeah I think, and just to clarify this is always from the scenario, from that person's perspective?

Interviewer: Not necessarily, it could be any perspective. It could be your perspective.

Respondent: Ok, yeah. Ok yeah what I think would decrease a sense of belonging is to continue doing what she's doing and she just keeps doing it and I think won't feel as, as you keep doing that trend longer and longer I think it only exasperates itself more and more.

Interviewer: What trend, in particular?

Respondent: Yeah sorry the trend of going to one church per month, like each of those once a month. So, if that trend continues, I think it continues to push into discouraging a sense of

belonging. And it may not be a thing you may notice at first, because if I'm in the band I feel belonging in that but after a while if I look around and see what relationships do I have and stuff like that, I think that's going to be more telling.

Interviewer: Awesome. Now I have a third and final scenario and will ask the same two questions as before. This person is a seminary student. This person is 28 years old and is a male. He is serving as a youth pastor at his local church. He teaches Sunday School to junior and senior high students. He highlights diversity in the church by introducing various worship styles. He attends church three times per week. He leads and participates in short term mission trips. He wants to be an elder in the church and he is unmarried. So, the first question, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Yeah, I think by making sure that, I feel like I keep harping on the same thing over and over but I think by continually having, especially men that he's close with, that are involved in his life, that he can share things with, be vulnerable with... Because yeah, being a seminary student, you said he's a youth pastor as well?

Interviewer: Yes

Respondent: Yeah youth pastor, going to church three times a week, there's a lot of ministry that's happening, and so you're a part of something but also to make sure there's deeper relationships within that church where you're able to be known, loved, cared for, I think that creates a sense of belonging.

Interviewer: Ok. And the second question, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think if he, if he were to see it as "This is my job, I go in, I go out, I mentor these kids, they're great," but not to see it like "Not only is this my job but I really love these people and care for these people." So, if he sees it mainly as a job then I think that will create a sense of or discourage a sense of belonging not only from them but maybe the students that he ministers to because they'll eventually be able to feel that and by the way they spend their time, and things like that.

Interviewer: Awesome. So, I do have a little more information about this scenario. He identifies as straight. He is a Nigerian immigrant and grew up as a farmer. He lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. He dates on Hinge and Tinder and will sometimes spend the night with his dates. He'll go to a club on Friday or Saturday night with his friends. He occasionally drinks and partakes in medical marijuana for anxiety. He does not tithe to any church and he does not participate in Sabbath rest. So, first question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Yeah, I think being from Nigeria, and they're in the States right?

Interviewer: Yes, in Salt Lake.

Respondent: I think being from a different country, a sense of belonging, what would promote a sense of belonging is people understanding his story, not just "You're black, you're from Africa, here are all of these stereotypes or all of these assumptions I've made now." But just to understand their story, understand the struggles that he's maybe had going from there to Salt Lake, so I think that could promote a sense of belonging. And then I think to even think through with the Tinder and spending the night with different dates, what is he actively trying to seek after? Because he's looking for something, so what is it that he's looking for and why is he going to those things specifically to find what he's looking for.

Interviewer: Awesome. So going back to some of the things you mentioned as variables might decrease a sense of belonging, feel free to correct me if I missed or if I misunderstood you but the lack of relationships, kind of variances in the community or church beliefs, especially for the lesbian couple, if you stopped attending that would decrease, obviously hate speech might discourage belonging, being overwhelmed or too busy with work, maybe not meeting the goals regarding kids or marriage, singleness, maybe there's some ethnic issues with belonging. So why do these variables, in particular out of everything we talked about, decrease a sense of belonging?

Respondent: Yeah, there's a lot of things in there, but I think when you consider all those different things, I think the reason why they decrease a sense of belonging, even to start with the relationships piece I think I've seen a lot of people that never were, never really had relationships. They had a connection to the place or to the church or the faith community but didn't really have any relationships or didn't try to have any relationships and you can tell over time they kind of become detached and eventually just wouldn't come any more because there wasn't that involvement so I think that's a big reason why it decreases. With all those other things I think part of it is understanding the person and loving the person well, and so with the ethnic, the background or understanding them or understanding what they're going after and why they're going after those things. So, to have a conversation rather than… So yeah those are, if I even answered your question, those are reasons why I think it discourages a sense of belonging.

Interviewer: Do these variables harm the community of faith?

Respondent: Do they harm the community of faith? I think they can. Obviously the hate speech, I think that can harm the community. I think if there's a lack of relationships it can harm the faith community in the sense of there's a shallowness, not a willingness to be involved in one of those lives. And I think there's always going to be factors that, intentionally or unintentional, that can harm the faith community, so it's always, being vigilant for what those things could be.

Interviewer: So, would those variables harm the individuals of faith?

Respondent: Like the individuals in the faith? Or those people in the scenario, specifically?

Interviewer: Yeah, so like if you were to say, effectively what I heard, if I heard you correctly, is that in regards to the church these variables could hurt the church because it creates a shallow church community. So, on the individual side, do these factors, would they impact a person of

faith versus the community of faith. Would one of these variables like relationships or lack of relationships, would that harm the individual?

Respondent: I think it can. If you see things happening, how this person was talked to or how that person was treated or the lack of relationship I think can, can definitely affect the individual for sure.

Interviewer: How would you see that playing out? Or how would you see that impacting, harming the individual?

Respondent: Yeah I think, let's say you have a friend and someone was maybe a little insensitive when, I think about race or ethnicity, you either see an interaction, you hear about it, or they talk to you about it, then that can impact you, especially if that person is, let's take the Nigerian guy for example, let's say it's another man or woman from Africa or even just from a different country that's not America and to see that exchange or encounter whatever it might be or see can have effects on them or how the encounter or engage or relate.

Interviewer: Sure. You kind of mentioned the dependence on the type of community impacting their ability to connect or belong, specifically to the lesbian couple, why does, I guess why does it depend on the makeup of the community for someone to feel a sense of belonging?

Respondent: Yeah, I think it will be varying degrees of sense of belonging. So, I think, depending again on the faith community, specifically with the lesbian married couple, that it could be, that they could feel loved in any of those spaces, but I think if you have, let's say the church interprets scripture and says that's ok, then they're going to feel a sense of belonging. Like even, I think you said they've been married for ten years and have a son, and so I think they're going to feel more accepted and then have more of a sense of belonging. Where if it's a church that reads scripture and understands it to be sin, then they might not feel as belonged into that community and so, and once again that doesn't mean that they can't be loved in that space, but the way they're living might not match up with what's being taught.

Interviewer: Awesome. So, would you like to add any additional thoughts regarding connectedness or belonging?

Respondent: I think it's huge. I think it's pretty important. When we look at the Bible, Jesus doesn't just save us from our sins but He saves us to a people, to His people, so part of the Christian life is you belong to the Lord and you belong with these people, and so, and just the big C Church but even the community within that and that's God's design, or people, is this needing of relationship and belonging.

Interviewer: Awesome, well that is all I have.

RESPONDENT N32

Interviewer: Awesome, so for tracking purposes I am conversing with respondent N32. I have three scenarios today. I will describe people who participate in their faith community. After each scenario I will ask the following two questions, one at a time. The first question will be what in the scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? And the second question is what in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? Do you have any questions before you start?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Awesome. Alright. Scenario one, I am going to describe two individuals here. These individuals are a committed couple of ten years. They are married and do have a marriage license. They have one son. One individual is a teacher and one individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every week. They tithe 10%. They do not hold leadership positions in the church. They attend a small group every week. They participate in communion weekly and they show personal affection in public at church. So, with that in mind, the first question, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: The weekly small group meeting.

Interviewer: Alright, anything else?

Respondent: What did you say about the foster care and adoption? I missed that.

Interviewer: So, they use their skills as a teacher and a nurse to support orphans and foster kids in the community.

Respondent: I would think that might also increase their sense of belonging.

Interviewer: Okay. So, the second question, what in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I can't really think of anything that, I guess I would need more information like if their working hours are very very long as a nurse and a teacher. I know as a teacher your hours are extremely long and so if they are running on empty every time they are participating in church or small group or even that sort of service oriented aspect of their life, it might not be filling their cup if they are just running on empty all of the time, so I think I would need more information on how long they work with their professions.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome, thank you. I do have more information about this scenario. A little bit at least. So, more information about this scenario. This couple is a lesbian couple. One woman is a Christian and one woman is not a Christian. Both women are white or Caucasian and they want their son to be raised in a faith community. So, considering the additional personal information, what in the scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: So since one of the, well there's a couple of things here but the first thing that stands out is the non-believer. If there is a married couple, lesbian or not lesbian, and only one person is a believer, we're already looking at a problem. So, I think first thing's first, it's work spaced. So, if a person that is not a believer is doing all of these actions, that small group, going to church, going to do service, if they're doing the service based on what Christ would want them to do, it isn't going to, yeah I mean the problem here is salvation, so in a world where they might not… I already forgot your question, what would decrease a sense of community?

Interviewer: Yeah, we can go with that. Decrease a sense of community, yeah.

Respondent: So, are we talking about community in the perspective of the world or their spiritual community?

Interviewer: Their faith community. So, what would decrease the sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community.

Respondent: It also might decrease, the fact that they are a lesbian couple, they might not be accepted as openly in the faith-based community. So, if their small group is already uncomfortable, a shield might go up immediately just knowing there's a lesbian couple coming over for small group, you know, red flag red flag, and it might cause people to not welcome them in.

Interviewer: Okay. When you said work-based earlier, what did you mean by that? That this scenario was work based or…

Respondent: No, it made me wonder why the non-believer was part of all of this. So are they being a part of a faith-based group, are they going to church, are they doing a service-led, I'm not really sure what to call it but yeah let's just call it service with the foster care and adoption. Are they doing that because their spouse is asking them to? Are they doing it because they feel that is their ticket into heaven? Like why are they doing all of this if they are not a believer? Because it's hard, especially if you have a child, and you have a career, and you are stretching yourself all the time, why? Why would you do that? You're not motivated by the importance of community and if they're not a believer how would they be motivated, how would they know? Like I just don't know what the motivation is.

Interviewer: Sure. Considering the additional personal information, is there anything that would increase their sense of belonging?

Respondent: So, I still would say the community group, because who knows, maybe they are very opening and welcoming. It could go either way, so it could be something that makes it hard or something that makes it easier, but I think the community group, depending on the people a part of it, would make it.

Interviewer: Awesome, thank you so much. So, scenario two, I have a second scenario and I will ask the same two questions following this scenario. This person is 34 years old, she's a female and a dentist. She serves in the Navy Reserves and is a classically trained piano player. She lives

in New York City, New York. She works in the public health sector to provide dental care to the homeless. She tithes 10% of her dental and Navy income to the church and she is unmarried. So, the first question, what in this scenario would increase the sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: She's going out and serving her time, giving back to the community which could turn into a sense of belonging.

Interviewer: Okay. Second question, what in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I don't know if I heard you say, is she a part of a church and part of a small group?

Interviewer: Um, she tithes 10% to the church.

Respondent: Okay so I think a decrease would be that she is not a part of a community, like a church community or a, it didn't sound like she, besides tithing, her interactions with other members of the church.

Interviewer: Awesome. I do have additional information about this scenario. She is Asian-American and is adopted from Korea. She lives with her significant other. She does attend two different churches about one time each per month each. She tithes 10% but only tithes to one of the churches she attends. She hops between churches so she can play piano and serve on different worship teams.

Respondent: She serves on different worship teams?

Interviewer: Yes, serves on different worship teams. So, the first question would be considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Yeah, I think that she's a part of a worship team where she's able to be known by people and is able to be present and fully, relationships are formed that way.

Interviewer: Alright. Considering the increased personal information, what in this scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think she's stretching herself thin by going to two different churches. I think she probably needs to choose one of them and give her time to one because I think doing both is probably not healthy just because no person has that much capacity.

Interviewer: Awesome, thank you. Now I have a third and final scenario and will ask the same two questions following the scenario. So, scenario three, this person is a seminary student. This person is 28 years old and is a male. He is serving as a youth pastor at his local church. He teaches Sunday School to junior and senior high students. He highlights diversity in the church by introducing various worship styles. He attends church three times per week. He leads and

participates in short term mission trips. He wants to be an elder in the church however he is unmarried. So, first question, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: His availability. He is very committed to being available for the activities he is a part of, or what he is, his job, just the fact that he is at church so many times a week and that he is available would increase that.

Interviewer: Alright. And the second question, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I mean, without knowing his heart and speaking it, I can't think of anything. If I were to have a conversation with the person I might have a different answer.

Interviewer: Yeah, no worries. I now have more information about this scenario. He identifies as straight. He is a Nigerian immigrant and grew up as a farmer. He lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. He does dates on Hinge and Tinder and will sometimes spend the night with his dates. He'll go to a club on Friday or Saturday night with his friends. He occasionally drinks and partakes in medical marijuana for anxiety. He does not tithe to any church and he does not participate in Sabbath rest. So, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario increases the sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: So, I would still say his availability to the church increases.

Interviewer: Alright. And the second question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: So, he probably shouldn't be spending the night with people he's meeting on Tinder. And so, I would think he might not be held accountable by anybody so I am sure if he had a group of people that he was being vulnerable with they would advise him not to go that route, and so if he is not being held accountable that would decrease his sense of community since really just, it seems really though as just a front he's putting, but really he has this second life that's going on which is not consistent with how he's presenting himself.

Interviewer: Awesome, thank you so much. So going back to a few of the variables that decrease a sense of belonging, I know you mentioned it kind of depends on the people regarding the lesbian couple, busy schedules, not being available, maybe low interactions with the church, accountability, lack of vulnerability, duplicity. So those are some of the variables that I heard as we were going through. Why do these variables in particular decrease a sense of belonging?

Respondent: So, I think in order to fully be known, you, well, let me think for a second. So why do I think the things that I said would decrease a sense of belonging in a community. Okay. I mean, I'm just going to be real frank, people read through bullshit. So, if you're not being yourself and you're not being honest and your true self, then you're not going to have good community. Good community are the people that are going to sharpen you, people that are going to be there for you, that you're going to call crying if your mom hurt your feelings or if you have

an issue with your spouse, and if you're not being honest and real then you're not going to have community, like real authentic community, so there's got to be that layer that comes down and that vulnerability that is inviting to those and so if you're too busy, if you're not being honest, if you're living a double life, if you're not making yourself available then you're not going to have rich community, so I think that's where a lot of my answers come from. And I mean people see it, if you're not being honest they see it, and so they're kinda going to hold you at arm's length if they are protecting themselves.

Interviewer: Awesome. I love that answer. In regards to these same variables and factors, do you believe or not do you believe, do these factors harm the community of faith or do they harm the church? And if they do, how do they harm the church?

Respondent: I do believe that it harms the church because a lot of times you see fake community, people pretending to be real known by each other but in reality they're not, and they're doing it because this is what they think they're supposed to be doing, but they're lacking the true community that is highlighted in Acts. So, if you're reading Acts you see what community was, the praying together, giving of their time, giving of their energy together. If that's not happening then you're just meeting for dinner and not really talking about anything honest and that does affect the church because a church can seem so big and seem so great but if there isn't authentic community going on, it isn't really doing anything.

Interviewer: So how would you describe not doing anything? What is the practical impact of the faith community on the church?

Respondent: So in a scenario that I personally experienced, I was part of a community group for four years and saw a lot of this fake community where not once in those four years did another individual ask me how my walk with God was going, how I was doing, it was more of how's work, how are things going with your family, great questions but there's not the authenticness and so that affected my faith because I'm navigating through things alone when I had a committed time to meet with people to talk about these things, to be there for each other and pray for each other and that wasn't happening. And for the church, they're seeing oh man, these people are being fed, they're meeting once a week for four years, they are thriving, when in reality I was suffering, we all were suffering because there was just so many, there was so much fakeness there, it wasn't authentic and it was always you could tell.

Interviewer: Alright, so I don't want to put words in your mouth but it almost sounds like it's harming the connection between the individuals so the church is less connected. Am I interpreting that correctly?

Respondent: Yeah I mean if the church is looking at it on paper, they look fine. Their members look fine. Their spiritual walks are great and healthy, they're doing the things that they're supposed to, but that's false information, and so the church can't move forward in a healthy way if they have that information.

Interviewer: So, do these factors or variables that decrease a sense of belonging harm the individuals of faith more than the church itself?

Respondent: So, the church is the people. It's hand and hand. Yes, if the people are not growing, if the people are stuck in a rut, then that's the church, so it's the same answer.

Interviewer: Would that change if we look at marginalized or underrepresented individuals in the church?

Respondent: So, like if there's less diversity?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: I'm not sure.

Interviewer: Okay. I have another question. Earlier you were talking about the motivation behind the individual who was not a Christian and what they were doing and why they were engaging in behavior that is more indicative of what the Christian might do. What do you think are the motivation of non-believers, or non-Christians I should say, in their actions and behavior?

Respondent: I mean there are so many answers to that question. I think one reason, I think everyone is designed to want, to want community. If we are all designed in God's image then we all want that sense of belonging, we all want that community and so if they are feeling like they belong, whether they believe what is being said, whether they believe or do not believe the Gospel it feels good, it feels good to have a group of people that you are coming together with, it feels good to belong to a church. If it's about status or appearances then that might be an answer as well or it could simply just be a checklist like if they were raised in a home where they said you must do these things but there never was the heart that was changed, they're still doing the actions but not changing the heart, or maybe they just don't even know that they're non-believers, they just think they are without ever really understanding the Gospel or turning their life to Christ. So yeah, those are maybe three different reasons but there's probably several more.

Interviewer: Awesome, thank you. One last question, I guess two more questions. Back to the lesbian couple in scenario one, you kind of mentioned it depends on the people, if they're more open or welcome, that could go either way that they feel more connected or less connected, why do you think that it depends on the people? [Text Wrapping Break]
Respondent: So, the question there was what would increase that couple's sense of belonging? So, looking at that question alone, not looking at what's going on underneath or what else needs to be addressed, just looking at what would make this lesbian couple feel welcome and belonged? The people, a part of that group, I believe if they view them as a couple that's like any other couple that has sin issues, like if me and my husband walked into a room and they look at us and they go "They're not perfect, there's sins there," if they view that couple the same way then that would change how they feel belonged. So whether it's a lesbian couple who is married or it's a dating couple who lives together and is sleeping together and is not married, sin is sin, and so if the people in that group view them as "Okay, these are people who are obviously here, who are obviously conscious of the Lord, then we can walk with them, we can love them, and pray with them, pray for them, and who knows, they may decide something radical that can happen," and that can really influence their life or if they decide that they're going to be grossed

out by them and push them away and just be kind of kind to them and nice to them then of course they're not going to feel welcomed, they're not going to feel like they belong and they're probably not going to go back. So, it just depends on, I would think, how the people respond, the people in the group respond.

Interviewer: Do you think, you also kind of talked about the result of welcoming them into the group could be who knows what, do you think the group or the people's motivation matters as to why they're welcoming? Like the small group, does their motivation matter as to why they're welcoming them?

Respondent: Yeah, absolutely. So, if they are a group that is a rich, true community, they might come together and say hey, let's love these people, let's come together in prayer, let's do all that we can to treat them as daughters of Christ. If they're not in rich community, they're going to have their opinions and their judgments and they're not going to speak to each other about it, they're just going to carry on or even hold a grudge that the leaders aren't doing more about it or why isn't the church doing something about it and they are the church, so they should come together and make a plan together, so it just depends on where they are.

Interviewer: Awesome. Would you like to add any additional thoughts regarding connectedness or belonging?

Respondent: I don't think so.

Interviewer: Awesome, well that's all the questions I have for you.

RESPONDENT N36

Interviewer: Sweet, for data tracking purposes I am conversing with respondent N36. Alright, I have three scenarios and I'm going to describe people who participate in their faith community,

either in the past or currently. After each of these scenarios I will ask the following two questions, one at a time. The first question: What in the scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? And the second question: What in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? Do you have any questions before we start?

Respondent: Nope.

Interviewer: Good news is there's no wrong answers like in nursing school. Cool. So, scenario one I am going to describe two people. These individuals are a committed couple of ten years. They are married and have a marriage license. They have one son. One individual is a teacher and one individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every week. They tithe 10% and do not hold leadership positions in the church. They attend a small group every week. They participate in communion every week and they show personal affection in public at church. So based on that information, my first question is what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: It sounds like they are spending regular time with their community, they go to church regularly and small group regularly, so simply by being with people in the church I think would increase that sense of community. You said it's a rural community, so maybe this is too much to assume but I'm assuming it would be a smaller gathering, maybe not, but if it was smaller that would also increase a sense of community or interconnectedness I think is what you were asking.

Interviewer: Yeah, awesome. So, the second question, what in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Maybe it sounds like they have a lot going on, I think you said they have kids, both are working, so maybe busyness, or a busy schedule could decrease connectedness. A busier schedule that is not directly connected to their church community could decrease their sense of interconnectedness.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. I now have more information about this scenario. This couple is a lesbian couple, one woman is a Christian and one woman is not a Christian. Both women are white or Caucasian and they both want their son to be raised in a Christian faith community. So, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think it's probably dependent on the faith community that they're in. So, if the faith community was accepting of specifically their marriage, their same sex marriage, that would probably increase a feeling of connectedness. And if there were similar couples at that faith community I think that would also increase a sense of belonging and connectedness for them.

Interviewer: Alright, awesome. So, the second question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think just about the exact opposite. So, if the community was not accepting of their lifestyle choices and maybe even to make it more extreme or aggressive or mean, for lack of a better word, towards them and their choices and not cultivating… If the community was not willing to cultivate a safe space to talk about it, so it doesn't mean they have to agree with the lifestyle choices but if they're not willing to provide a place to have discussion in a way that's not judgmental then I think that would create a sense of disconnectedness to the church. And if they're the only lesbian couple at the church, that by nature can just make you feel less connected because people don't have the same experiences you do.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome, thanks. I have a second scenario now and I will ask the same two questions following this scenario. This person is 34 years old, she's a female and a dentist. She serves in the Navy Reserves. She is a classically trained piano player. She lives in New York City, New York. She works in public health to provide dental care to the homeless. She tithes 10% of her dental and Navy income to the church. She is unmarried. So, the first question, based off this information, what in this scenario would increase the sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think her feeling like she has specific people, families and non-families, who are willing and want to invite her in and be a part of their day-to-day or just a part of their community, so an invitation from all people in the church of different marital status I guess. And again, a common theme I think people with similar experiences, so other people, mid-30s who are single who have some sort of military experience. Also New York City, so being close to church in a big city I think increases a feeling of connectedness.

Interviewer: Awesome. So second question, what in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think a church that has a really good college program and a really good married couples' program but doesn't know what to do with that middle stage of life I guess would make it hard to feel connected to the church because it feels like no one is in your life position. And something like older families only inviting younger married couples over for dinner, that could feel pretty ostracizing or a lack of connection I guess. I think by nature of being in New York City or a bigger city there's more people so that could lend to that lack of connectedness to a church or lack of connectedness to something unified.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. I now have more information about this scenario. She is Asian-American and is adopted from Korea. She lives with her significant other. She attends two different churches about one time per month each. She tithes 10% but only tithes to one of the two churches that she attends. She hops between churches so she can play piano and serve on different worship teams. Considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Well, it sounds like she's serving at one of the churches, she's playing piano, I think those opportunities often increase the sense of connectedness. Maybe, I guess this isn't in the scenario, but people who go to a church that has a similar ethnic background to what they identify with could increase the sense of connectedness, and vice versa, the next question would be vice versa. Did you say in the scenario, does her significant other attend either of these churches or is that not known?

Interviewer: That is not known.

Respondent: That's probably all I can think of with that additional information.

Interviewer: Yeah. So, the second question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think splitting time between two churches. Kind of like I said before, time with the church I think increases your feeling of connectedness. And also, I would imagine there's a split commitment level of I haven't fully invested here and I haven't fully invested here, and so by nature of that I just don't feel as connected to one or the other. Depending on if she shared with anyone in the church that she lives with her significant other or not, if she has not shared there might be some shame wrapped up in that which would lead to some feelings of probably feeling disconnected because she doesn't feel known. Or if that is known, maybe she's received negative comments or what not in a place that doesn't feel safe or productive, then that can make you feel more disconnected. And I guess you don't know this in the scenario, but wait do we know if the significant other is a believer or not a believer?

Interviewer: Not in this scenario. Good question though.

Respondent: Yeah that's probably all I have.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome, perfect. Now I have a third and final scenario and will ask the same two questions following this scenario. Scenario three, this person is a seminary student. This person is 28 years old and is a male. He is serving as a youth pastor at his local church. He teaches Sunday School to junior and senior high students. He highlights diversity in the church by introducing various worship styles. He attends church three times per week. He leads and participates in short term mission trips. He wants to be an elder in the church and he is unmarried. So based on that information, first question, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think one, just the fact that he's in seminary, he's probably thinking about faith a lot throughout his day whereas if you're not in that it's harder for that to come up in your day to day, or moment to moment in your day. Sounds like he's super involved in serving and interacting with the youth which would increase his connection with one, the youth, and I would imagine the youth's parents and families, and I also would imagine with the leadership at the church if he's involved in a program I'd imagine he's rubbing shoulders with leadership in the

church which would increase that feeling of connectedness. He's leading, helping lead those mission trips, and he's regularly doing that right?

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: Yeah so again there's that commitment and this long-term vision of this is what I'm doing, I'm a part of this, I'm part of what this church is doing regularly. Again, I think that would increase the sense of belonging. You don't know the demographic, or I don't think you shared the demographics of the church or major ethnicity but often white male, you might be finding more white males in the congregation so that would kind of increase the sense of I belong here, people look like me. Yeah.

Interviewer: Awesome. Alright. I now have more information about this scenario.

Respondent: Fancy that.

Interviewer: I know right. It's becoming a habit. He identifies as straight. He is a Nigerian immigrant and grew up as a farmer. He lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. He dates on Hinge and Tinder and sometimes will spend the night with his dates. He'll occasionally go to a club on Friday or Saturday night with friends. He occasionally drinks and partakes in medical marijuana for anxiety. He does not tithe to any church. He does not participate in Sabbath rest. So, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Well, if he identifies as heterosexual that would probably increase his similarity to the majority culture in a church, more often than not. I think that's about it that would change with that.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. So, second question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Again, maybe I'm assuming much, I guess maybe it's dependent on is this something that he's sharing with people in the community or not. So, if this is what he's doing on the side and not sharing with the community I think just the feeling of "I'm doing all these things at church, I'm involved in all these really good-looking things, and yet these people don't know about this large piece of my life." I think that would make him feel less connected, less known.

Interviewer: Which parts of his life do you think that would…

Respondent: Yeah, mainly his spending the night with his significant others. Stuff like that. Even being on dating apps, if people don't know about that I think could make him feel less connected, particularly Tinder probably. I think there are some different connotations with Tinder, right or wrong, different connotations I guess. You said he's from Nigeria. Did you say he's Caucasian or identifies as Caucasian or did I make that up?

Interviewer: He's not Caucasian.

Respondent: Yeah I think I said that, maybe I made that up or was assuming that, unfortunately. Well, that, depending on his church again, is going to, that could make him feel less connected. Yeah I think that's all I can think of.

Interviewer: Awesome, cool. Ok so I have a couple of follow up questions. So now that we've completed those scenarios. So going back to a few of the variables that I heard from you on what might decrease a sense of belonging, I kind of heard busyness, a lack of safe space, if there's not sameness of experience, potentially a big city, singleness, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, time, so like not enough time to connect with people in a church or maybe geographical separation between the church or personal congruence. Wow you came up with a lot of stuff. So, thinking about those specific variables, and if I missed something please let me know, why do these variables in particular decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness?

Respondent: So, I think naturally we tend towards people who have the same experiences with us. I guess there's a sense of you have an understanding and I don't have to explain, and that feels easier and is a more natural, you don't have to work to feel connected in those things. And that hits ethnicity, sexual orientation, relationship status, age even, and then… Sorry what was your question? What about these?

Interviewer: Yeah why are these the variables that decrease someone's ability to connect? Out of everything we talked about, why are those the variables that decrease a sense of belonging.

Respondent: Okay, yeah. I think these are identifiers of people and so if you use these as identifiers for yourself, and then if that is either not reflected in the church or treated in a way that is uncomfortable or shameful or something like that, then that creates shame, so that creates a "I am not welcome, I am not wanted, in fact people think negatively, and not just negatively but people think, we'll go with negatively, of me," I guess. They are personal identifiers. I think the church also doesn't know how to talk about a lot of these things, and because of that there's also this ambiguity in relationships when they're not talked about which creates a once again lack of not feeling known and therefore not actually feeling connected.

Interviewer: So, are you, when you say not feeling known, therefore not feeling connected, is it essential to be known to be connected?

Respondent: I think so. I think that's the key piece of actually feeling connected. I think time helps you to feel, like spending time and increased time with people helps you to feel connected only because, I guess only if that time is time well spent. I hate to use this word because it's used so often but only if it's intentional time, so time when you're trying to draw out personal things in a person. So, if it's just showing up to do these things, checking off these lists, these things you do together, I would say that is not actual connectedness.

Interviewer: Okay. So, is the traditional church model substantial for connection?

Respondent: I personally do not think so.

Interviewer: How so, and how could it be done better?

Respondent: Yeah, from my experience it's pretty easy to show up and attend things, even like… It's very easy to show up, attend church, and leave church which I think is not going to help foster a true connected feeling. I think small groups are a better option for that true connectedness. I don't think just by going to small group it's going to happen though. It does have to be fostered and developed together and as a small group, and it's not just… I think the current model is there is a, from my experiences in a traditional church are there's a small group leader, and the small group leader kind of has the onus of creating unity, connectedness, whatnot which is not super fair or effective because there's usually a decent number of other people in that small group. And you asked what could be done to make it better?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: I think even, I actually really do like small groups and the larger church format on Sunday. I think they have, they both have good value. I think on a smaller group level, even having a way to rotate who is leading or who is facilitating so everyone is invested or everyone has some sort of buy in, they don't just show up they're actually putting something into the group which I think is a good first step in beginning that connectedness process.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. Very good. Well would you like to add any additional thoughts regarding connectedness or belonging?

Respondent: I think it's really elusive, it's also I think a little bit subjective. I do think it's of high value of Jesus and something we need to constantly, we the church need to be constantly striving for and not allowing, the church should not allow themselves to think they are doing well in this connectedness because I think there's always room to continue to increase that.

Interviewer: Awesome, well that's all I have.

RESPONDENT N4

Interviewer: Awesome. So, for data tracking purposes I am conversing with respondent N4. Cool. Alright, I have three scenarios where I will describe people who participate in their faith community. After each scenario I will ask the following questions, one at a time. The first question will be what in the scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? The second question will be what in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? Do you have any questions before we start?

Respondent: I don't think so.

Interviewer: Alright, it's pretty straightforward and easy, and there's no wrong answers. Alright so scenario one I am going to describe two individuals here. These individuals are a committed couple of ten years. They are married and do have a marriage license. They have one son. One

individual is a teacher and one individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every week. They tithe 10%. They do not hold leadership positions in the church. They attend a small group every week. They participate in communion weekly and they show personal affection in public at church. So, the first question, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: In terms of what they do, what would indicate an increase or…

Interviewer: Yeah, from that scenario what would indicate an increase in their sense of connection or belonging to a faith community?

Respondent: I mean, I suppose the fact that they're, not only are they involved in church but they also, you said it sounds like they attend a small group so there's potential for not just being a… Like they're not just participating on Sundays but they're also being perhaps plugged in with other members of the community, of the church community, possibly in more of a, I don't want to say life on life but maybe. Obviously, that would depend, but I would say that would indicate that maybe they were perhaps really involved with relationships with the believers not just going to church, so possibly.

Interviewer: Great. So, second question, what in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I guess what comes to mind for me is almost the same answer as the first, because again it depends on the specific scenario but it sounds like they're involved with stuff, you know like you said they go to church, they are a part of the small group and stuff. So which at the same time what I also know is just because you're doing those things doesn't automatically mean that there's a sense of belonging, that you can be in the church community, doing stuff, hanging out with people, and yet not really have an actual sense of connectedness or actually really be connected because you can find people who are doing a lot of things and yet don't have a depth of relationship with the people in their community. So, it's kind of odd to say that, but it's like honestly the same thing can really indicate one or the other, you honestly don't know. You also hear they're not involved with leadership so it's like on the one hand, what could come to mind is oh, then there isn't as much sense of belonging because they haven't taken ownership in their church, but you also don't know the specific scenarios of maybe they don't have the capacity to, it sounds like they're doing a lot of other things besides working, sounds like there's the foster kids and they're working with foster kids and so leadership could increase a sense of belonging, it could also be a distraction from really being engaged with the Lord and with the relationships they have. So yeah it's kind of, I'm sure it's odd to say that but at the same time it's almost like all the things could indicate either or, at least in my mind as I hear it and it would depend on obviously the very specifics if this was a real situation of sitting down with them and getting to know them in that. So that's at least what comes to mind for me.

Interviewer: Cool. I now have more information about this scenario. This couple is a lesbian couple, one woman is a Christian and one woman is not a Christian. Both women are white or Caucasian. They want their son to be raised in a faith community. So, the first question,

considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Well one thing that comes to mind is the fact that it sounds like one of them is open to pursuing the faith community, and it sounds like the fact that this couple wants their son to be engaged there is the potential for seeing yes, they want their son involved, and perhaps that's an opportunity for them to become plugged in as well and their own way to encounter Jesus through the community, and of course that would depend on what the community is like but it sounds to me like that's an opportunity as well for engagement in that, in that community. So yeah.

Interviewer: Alright, thank you. So, the second question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Well, the fact that they're a lesbian couple, depending on quite a few factors, their own backgrounds, their own story, the things that they've gone through with any faith community, if they have, growing up that realistically could be a potential for decrease in a sense of belonging because depending on so many factors, with what kind of church community you're getting involved in, you could have a church community that's very open and affirming to them as a lesbian couple, you could have a church community that's very not affirming of them as a lesbian couple and that would be a very big decrease in a sense of belonging. You could have a faith community that is supportive of them but doesn't necessarily agree with what they're doing but they're certainly loving of this couple and being able to engage with them where they're at and just being able to get to know them and get to know their story, so that's another one of those things where it could kinda depend more on the church community rather than the specific scenario itself. Sort of. I mean obviously I think that would go a lot into what is the background of these two women and especially in the context of what is their experience with the faith community, but also a lot would be on the faith community itself and how do they respond to that scenario, and how do they respond to that. Obviously, there is not a clear answer based on the particular information, but that's at least what I think.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome, thank you. I now have a second scenario and will ask the same two questions following this scenario. Scenario two. This person is 34 years old, she's a female and she is a dentist. She serves in the Navy Reserves. She is a classically trained piano player. She lives in New York City, New York. She works in public health to provide dental care to the homeless. She tithes 10% of her dental and Navy income to the church. She is unmarried. So, the first question: What in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Obviously, there's not necessarily a lot of information in the scenario. One thing at least that would be a question that I would wonder that could help in the sense of belonging is a lot of the things she's doing, there's kind of a question of like what's her mission. Because yeah there's these things she's doing, she's got passions like there's ways she can serve in the church with some of her giftings like she's a classically trained pianist and it sounds like she has a heart for people with being able to provide free dental care to those who need it. Potentially depending on the faith community she's in, is she a part of a faith community that is for people of the

military, you know that certainly if that was the case that would increase a sense of belonging with that sharedness. Yeah that's about all that comes to mind at the moment.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. So, second question, what in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I suppose what comes to mind is thinking about, again without additional information one question comes to mind which is kinda similar to the first scenario is based on how much she's doing, is she plugged in with the church? And by plugged in, it sounds like she tithes, is she involved with relationships with other believers who believe as she does and she's able to have open, honest connection with. So, depending on what her schedule looks like and even within herself, obviously her own experiences, that would be a question that comes to mind for me, is she involved with the church or the faith community in terms of like real connectedness with people.

Interviewer: Awesome. I now have more information about this scenario. She is Asian-American and is adopted from Korea. She lives with her significant other. She attends two different churches about one time per month each. She tithes 10% but only tithes to one of the churches that she attends. She hops between churches so she can play piano and serve on different worship teams. So, the first question would be considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Well kind of like I indicated and it sounds like that would be with the additional information, being able to use her talents as a pianist as a way to be involved with the worship team, that certainly could increase a sense of connectedness within the faith community. I think that's about all I've got.

Interviewer: Okay. So, the second question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Well one thing and of course this would depend on the church she goes to, what is the demographic. Well, maybe, I don't know. There's a potential demographic, because like you said she was adopted from Korea but she was also born and raised here in the States so depending on, I guess depending on her experiences and what her cultural identity is that could increase or decrease so that would be very dependent on her. I would say the fact that she doesn't seem like she's very plugged in, that would definitely decrease a sense of belonging because it sounds like she doesn't go often, she's not plugged in with one community for what seems like a significant period of time. Even if she's going to these two places, it sounds like there's, that could be a potential for decrease at least as I think about it because you have divided interests, sort of in that sense where you're not investing in one place with that one community and it sounds like for her she may not be investing much anyway in either community and that would, for me that would seem like that would definitely be a potential for a decrease. I suppose another potential for decrease, it sounds like she's living with her significant other, depending on the faith community that she's trying to be a part of, that could be a barrier depending on not only

what are the convictions of the place she's going to but also their response to that, like if people find out that's what she's doing, what is their response to that, and that has the potential, potentially in either direction depending on how the faith community handles it, but yeah.

Interviewer: Awesome, thanks. Now I have a third and final scenario and will ask the same two questions following the scenario. Scenario three, this person is a seminary student. This person is 28 years old and is a male. He is serving as a youth pastor at his local church. He teaches Sunday School to junior and senior high students. He highlights diversity in the church by introducing various worship styles. He attends church three times per week. He leads and participates in short term missions trips. He wants to be an elder in the church and he is unmarried. So, the first question, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Well, the fact that he's very involved has the potential, again, it sounds like he's pretty invested in this church so there's the potential for increased sense of belonging because it sounds like he's pretty committed and depending on what that looks like with relationships with people I think that there's potential in there.

Interviewer: Okay. And second question, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: The fact that he is so involved with a lot of different things. Because, and again, and the potential is again my thought to my question is how plugged in with real, intimate healthy relationships is he having in that faith community? Because if he's doing a lot of these things and that's great, one possible potential is if he's not really being poured into and having a lot of good healthy mutual relationship and intimacy in healthy ways with people, that would or could decrease a sense of belonging in terms of you're doing a lot of stuff but you're not necessarily engaged in that level. Another thing that comes to mind and again this would depend on specific information, he's unmarried and depending on the faith, and depending on the demographics of the church that could actually be either an increase or a decrease in a sense of belonging. I would say there's a potential of is he a part of a church that has a lot of single people, is he one of the very few single people in the church that's mostly married people with children around his age? That could potentially give a sense of decrease in belonging for feeling in a different life stage, and of course this would depend on him and what he thinks and feels, but I could see like depending on the demographics that could be a potential for increase or decrease in the sense of belonging.

Interviewer: Awesome. Alright, I have more information about this scenario. He identifies as straight. He is a Nigerian immigrant and grew up as a farmer. He lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. He dates on Hinge and Tinder and will sometimes spend the night with his dates. He'll go to a club on Friday or Saturday night with his friends. He occasionally drinks and partakes in medical marijuana for anxiety. He does not tithe to any church and he does not participate in Sabbath rest. So, first question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Well I think the fact that he, it sounds like he still has the desire for… Potentially how he might want to be involved with just in general, he's in seminary trying to be a youth leader, helping lead youth and these different things so I think there's the potential for increase a sense of belonging by the fact that, I think kinda similar to the first where there's still a level of involvement and… Hmm… I thought I had more but apparently I don't.

Interviewer: Second question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Well, depending on what kind of faith community he's involved in, it sounds like some of the personal life stuff may clash, either somewhat or very hard with the type of faith community he's a part of. It sounds like with some of the stuff that he does, depending on the faith community that could be a very big barrier, especially if that's something that his faith community doesn't know about, which you know what would that mean to even talk to them about it if they knew, do they know, if they knew how would that affect things? And especially if he's trying to be a part of a community that isn't open to that and he's trying to be involved but also if he's keeping that a secret, that certainly, that would absolutely decrease a feeling of sense of connectedness and belonging because at that point you're not being genuine and authentic with them, you're hiding as you're trying to do these things. Even for like his seminary, do they know that? What are their convictions? Yeah it just sounds like different, particular lifestyle choice things, that could be a big decrease depending on quite a few different factors. Again, thinking of his, you said he's Nigerian, that, again depending on the community could increase or decrease because that could depend on the church community and that could depend on what are their values and convictions when it comes to something like that, their own values on diversity and what that looks like. So that could be either direction really depending on the community.

Interviewer: Awesome, thank you. So going back to a few of the variables that you mentioned might decrease a sense of belonging- I know you mentioned schedules, time for relationships, it depends on the church demographic, depth of relationship, ownership of community, a few of these variables that you mentioned. Why do these variables decrease a sense of belonging?

Respondent: I think the reason I think about it that way comes from, when I think of sense of belonging to a faith community, the way that I think about it is I think far past just doing stuff with them and really more of kind of the sense of being in terms of really in the context of relationships. That's like I have a lot of, both, between experience and even just witnessing it, people who they can do a lot of stuff with the church, they can be very busy and active with doing things without really having relationship either with God and or usually both, a relationship with the people within that church. For me, I think it can decrease a sense of belonging or at the very least if there is a sense of belonging that the person feels, I could argue that it's perhaps very surface-y and shallow. Perhaps not, but that would be my gut reaction, that if someone feels connected and they're like "Yeah, I feel connected to this church, I do all this stuff," that's like well that's great and I'm glad you feel that, but bigger picture and longer term, does that sustain you? And my general feeling is no, because relationships matter, and again this is just speaking for myself, relationships matter and really the sense of belonging that's truly

transformative, because if we think about being a part of a church community, the sense of belonging isn't just about "I feel good about myself," it's ultimately pointing towards something, it's pointing towards transformation and growth with this community of believers towards what God is doing, and growing intimacy with Him and being a part of what He's doing in the context of relationships and to me, that's where real healing, that's where real transformation, that's where real growth happens, and so just doing stuff in the community without actually having that connection with people, ultimately I feel like it's very short lived, quite honestly.

Interviewer: Yeah. That connection with people that you mentioned, do you think that connection with people needs to be other members of the faith community or just connection with people in general?

Respondent: Yes (laughing). In some ways both. I would say in particular though, I would say it's particularly important for that connection, for quite a bit of that connection to be with the faith community, and not just the faith community. Basically, a faith community, slow down. In my mind, I see value in a faith community where you are truly walking together with the same vision and goal, you are able to really connect with each other emotionally at differing levels depending on relationship but having people that you can actually be authentic with and be, having good, healthy relationships with them and that you also have a common goal, common passion that really gets into that sense of faith. And I think that there's room for and there can be importance of having relationships with people outside of that faith community, even if they don't share the same faith as you, there's certainly value in that, like that's good, but if it's only that without that faith community, I would say it often is not conducive to, it's not conducive to your faith, it's not very often conducive to really just your, who you are as a person. So, I would say there absolutely can be value and I'd say there ought to be relationships with people who don't share the same faith values, the same faith as you, and having relationships outside of that, but if that's all you have, I don't see that as particularly, thinking bigger picture and longer term, that often really falls short.

Interviewer: Yeah. So, going back to some of those variables and factors that decrease a sense of belonging, do you think that these factors harm the community of faith, and if so, how?

Respondent: They can. Not necessarily automatically. But I would say, I mean it can be a bit nuanced I suppose. So, for example doing a lot of stuff. That isn't inherently a bad thing, if the faith community has people who are really engaged in a lot of things with the faith community and stuff, that certainly is not an automatic problem, I think where it can become a problem is when it's only focused on the doing, when it's only focused on, maybe a specific way of talking about it as an example is maybe a faith community that's like really, that's very focused on programs, like we're going to host all these programs, we're going to do all these programs, we're going to have people helping with and engaging with all these programs. That isn't inherently bad or wrong but I've also seen it where that replaces connection with God, that replaces connection with people where suddenly instead of a faith community that's really engaged with their relationship with God, they've boiled relationship with God to "I do all this stuff, I do all these things for Him, I'm involved, I never really spend time with Him outside of that but it doesn't really matter because I do all these things." And so again, it's not, it doesn't inherently start or necessarily mean that it's a detriment, it could easily turn into that depending

on leadership, depending on who are the members of that congregation, how things are communicated from leadership to people in the congregation. So, I don't think that it's inherently destructive but I have seen where that becomes the replacement for actual engagement with God and with the faith community in actual relationship in healthy and intimate ways that suddenly disappears, and I shouldn't say suddenly but actually gradually, much more gradually than suddenly, that it's squeezed out in the name of doing all this stuff.

Interviewer: Awesome. So, do you think these factors harm the individuals of faith?

Respondent: Yes, and again, if the, when done poorly, yes. Again, I think there actually can be a lot of benefit to being involved with a lot of things with the faith community, it's not that it's inherently bad, being involved with the faith community can also be a potential for that connection and that sense of belonging, so it's not to say that the individuals harm simply from being super busy and doing all this stuff, but it can harm the individual if what's communicated or even not necessarily what's communicated but what they take away from it, things in their own life, there can be harm, again if, essentially if their faith boils down to "I do all this stuff," and that certainly is a very big harm to them and it harms the community as a whole because the community is greater than the sum of the individuals and how they're engaging and what's going on in their lives and whether they realize it or not, that very much impacts their faith community. And so, I would say that certainly can harm the individual, but again there's potential where that actually can help because say there's someone who isn't very engaged, who doesn't really know what it looks like to, for their faith, maybe they're a new convert and they don't really understand necessarily what that all means and what it looks like. In their case getting involved could be a harm, it actually could be a great blessing because they could actually be building relationships with people and having that life engagement and learning more about what it looks like to live out their faith. So yeah, in my mind it's not quite a clear-cut answer, like it certainly has the potential in a lot of different directions.

Interviewer: Yeah, absolutely. So, going back to, you kind of used the phrase "depending on the church, depending on the church demographic, depending on what the community is like," that phrase was used a lot, why is that such a prevalent phrase when it comes to belonging?

Respondent: Well for one I try to be nuanced, so it's a little bit of a cop out to be like "it depends", so that's part of it, trying not to be, because there's so many different people and so many different situations that it can be hard to nail down but… I'm sorry can you ask the question one more time? I know it's related to when I said depending on the church, depending on the faith community.

Interviewer: Yeah, I'm just trying to understand a bit why that phrase is so critical as a response, or so prevalent as a response to a sense of belonging.

Respondent: Right. Well, I think it's because, just because a faith community is similar in name or idea to another one, the way that plays out can be so different. I mean you can have two churches, as an example, say two churches say that they're Christian, so they're a Christian church, one faith community is very liberal in the sense that they might focus more on loving people, they may not necessarily have a high view of the authority of the Bible and different

things but they just want to be able to love and serve people. You could have another church that is perhaps more conservative in the sense that they're very much about the authority of scripture and we need to get doctrine down really hard and that's what's really important. Maybe politics in there, maybe not, doesn't quite matter. Point being, they both claim to be Christian churches, but they're incredibly different from each other. So, one person who's trying, who goes to the first, just because it's called Christian they may be like "Woah, this is totally, just no," and then go to the other church and be like "Oh this is much more in line with what I think." And someone who's the opposite and goes to the second church and is like "Oh, no way, not this," and then goes to the first church and is like "Oh yeah, this is totally what I'm all about." And then there's a person who goes to both and is like "I don't really fit in either one of these churches." Yeah, the reason I would say depending on the church is just because they're called a church; that can mean so many different things. So many different things. And that's why in my answers I'm trying to have the nuance of depending on this place that is called a church, this thing might be an issue at this one place but absolutely not an issue at this place. Thinking of the first scenario with the couple that identified as lesbian, perhaps some churches they're very open and affirming and wanting them to live that out whereas another church that would be incredibly harsh and condemning of them because of that. So that's why in the terms of increase or decrease a sense of belonging, it just depends.

Interviewer: Awesome, thank you. Would you like to add any additional thoughts regarding connectedness or belonging?

Respondent: I don't think I have any particular additional thoughts that come to mind.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome.

RESPONDENT N41

Interviewer: For tracking purposes I am conversing with respondent N41. Alright, the first three scenarios I have here, I'm going to talk about different people who participate in their faith community. After each scenario I will ask two questions, one at a time. The first question will be what in the scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? And the second question will be what in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? Do you have any questions before we start?

Respondent: No. Do you mind if I eat a snack? Ok thanks!

Interviewer: No worries, snack away. The first scenario, I am going to describe two different people. These individuals are a committed couple of ten years. They are married and have a marriage license. They have one son. One individual is a teacher and one individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every week. They tithe 10%. They do not hold leadership positions in the church. They attend a small group weekly. They participate in communion weekly. They show personal affection in public at church. So, the first question, based on that scenario, what would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I don't know, probably being in a small group and going to church regularly. Like just from their situation, what of those things would make them feel more connected?

Interviewer: Yeah, absolutely.

Respondent: Oh, ok, then yeah being in a small group and I'd say going to church as long as they aren't just going to church and leaving right away, I think there's importance in going to church and staying afterwards.

Interviewer: Alright. So, second question, what in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Can you repeat the question, or like what the things were?

Interviewer: Sure, yeah. These individuals are a committed couple of ten years. They are married and do have a marriage license and they have one son. One individual is a teacher and one individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every week. They tithe 10%. They do not hold leadership positions in the church. They attend a small group weekly. They participate in communion weekly. They show personal affection in public at church. So, the second question would be what in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Maybe not having a leadership position in the church. I mean not everybody has to have a leadership position, you mean like serving, serving in general, or leading, like leading a Bible study?

Interviewer: It could be either.

Respondent: Okay. Yeah I think if you're not serving you probably wouldn't feel as connected. I know if I've ever been at a church and I'm not serving I don't feel as connected.

Interviewer: Okay. I now have some more information about this scenario. This couple is a lesbian couple, one woman is a Christian and one woman is not a Christian. Both women are white or Caucasian and they both want their son to be raised in a faith community. So, the follow up question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging or connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Probably not being lesbian. Probably. I don't know I mean I believe that marriage is between a man and a woman so I believe that if people aren't walking in God's will they aren't going to feel connected with God since that separates you from God, and if you're not connected with God your relationships with others aren't going to be as pure or as good as they could be. So, if they're not in proper relationship with each other they probably don't have a relationship with God. Yeah I've never thought of that before and been asked this, wow. Yeah probably that because they're not walking in God's will and so they're not going to feel connected in the

community because they're probably going to feel alienated, depending on how their church body is I guess. I mean I hope they're loved, but it shouldn't be tolerated.

Interviewer: Ok, is there anything else in there based on the personal information that would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I mean I'm surprised, they're like fostering kids aren't they? And they have a kid too.

Interviewer: Correct.

Respondent: I don't know. I don't think I have anything else.

Interviewer: Perfect, no worries. Awesome, now I have a second scenario and I will ask the same two questions following this scenario. This person is 34 years old, she's a female and a dentist. She serves in the Navy Reserves. She is a classically trained piano player and lives in New York City, New York. She works in public health to provide dental care to the homeless. She tithes 10% of her dental and Navy income to the church and she is unmarried. So, the first question: What in this scenario would increase the sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Like what she's already doing?

Interviewer: Yeah, out of what she's doing right now.

Respondent: It doesn't sound like she's doing very much. I mean she's tithing but like tithing for me doesn't make me feel more connected to something. I'm happy to support other people but I don't feel super connected doing that.

Interviewer: Ok, awesome. So, the second question was what in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: What all was about this lady? Can you repeat it?

Interviewer: Sure, yeah. She's a dentist and she serve in the Navy Reserves. She is a classically trained piano player and lives in New York City, New York. She works in public health to provide dental care to the homeless. She tithes 10% of her dental and Navy income to the church and she is unmarried.

Respondent: Something that could make her feel more connected, going back to the previous question, is that she's involved giving dental care to other people, that's probably very fulfilling to be able to serve in that capacity. Maybe unconnected though, maybe because she's not married. Just because someone's not married doesn't mean they can't be connected but I'm sure, hopefully they have a good singles ministry or young adult ministry, but especially if you're older like 34 I feel like most people want to be married by that age, so maybe she feels disconnected.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. I do have some more information about this scenario. She is Asian-American and is adopted from Korea. She lives with her significant other. She attends two different churches about one time per month each. She tithes 10% but only tithes to one of the churches she attends. And she hops between churches because she wants to play piano and serve on different worship teams. So, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Yikes so much! Same thing as the last situation with living outside of God's will, living with a significant other, she's probably not going to feel very connected. Also depending on what her theology is, like if she believes that's wrong. Going from having two churches I wouldn't agree with because you're not going to be fully committed there, like you're not going to be able to form those relationships if you're constantly bouncing back and forth. It's not unwise to have multiple churches, like I listen to podcasts from other churches, I think it's fine to listen to sermons from other people, but as far as connection and I community I think you should only be a part of one group if you want to get the most out of it.

Interviewer: Awesome. So, is there anything else that would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Maybe her race. I don't feel racism, probably because I'm white, but if she's Asian-American she may feel a racial difference, so she may feel less belonging.

Interviewer: Awesome. Now I have a third and final scenario and will ask the same two questions following this scenario. This individual in scenario three is a seminary student. This person is 28 years old and is a male. He is serving as a youth pastor at his local church. He teaches Sunday School to junior and senior high students. He highlights diversity in the church by introducing various worship styles. He attends church three times per week. He leads and participates in short term mission trips. He wants to be an elder in the church and he is unmarried. So, first question: What in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community.

Respondent: Like everything you just said. I probably missed most of it but the fact he's serving as a youth pastor, wanting to become an elder, I'm sure he's sitting under people wanting to become an elder and having those discipleship and mentorship relationships. He's being poured into, he's pouring out. Serving, he's going to church so regularly, probably seeing lots of people.

Interviewer: Alright. So, second question, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: He may be pretty busy, that sounds like a lot of stuff he's doing, I can't imagine he's not exhausted after doing all of that.

Interviewer: Yeah, awesome. I now have some more information about this scenario. So, he does identify as straight. He is a Nigerian immigrant and grew up as a farmer. He lives in Salt Lake

City, Utah. He dates on Hinge and Tinder and will sometimes spend the night with his dates. He'll go to a club on Friday or Saturday night with his friends. He will occasionally drink and partakes in medical marijuana for his anxiety. He does not tithe to any church and he does not participate in Sabbath rest. So, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I don't think any of that.

Interviewer: Okay. Considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: All of that. The fact that he's dating on Tinder, I don't know. I feel like your heart has to be in the right spot, if you're using Tinder, I personally don't agree with it but I'm not going to just cast away everyone that does. I don't know. All of it. Like I don't even remember what all was said but I remember being like that doesn't sound like he's walking with the Lord and it just made me really sad that he's wanting to be an elder, and he's mentoring youth. But I don't know, everything that you just said would lead to feeling disconnected.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. So really quick just a couple of follow up questions. Going back to some of the variables that you mentioned as decreasing belonging, some of the things I kind of heard were sin, or not walking with God, not serving or leading at church, living outside of God's will, maybe racial difference, busyness, why do these variables, particularly that were chosen, why are those variables the ones that decrease a sense of belonging?

Respondent: I think just because if you're part of a group you have similar values, so if people of the Christian faith, their values should be in line with the word of God if they're truly a believer. So, if someone's outside of those values, it's going to cause disunity, especially if it's wrong. Obviously, there's things that like really matter, like how someone believes they're saved or gay marriage, those are strong things that are closed hand. Open hand it's like if you're going to homeschool your kid, it's like ok we can have different values on that, that doesn't mean you're not a Christian, but I think to be a part of something you have to have similar values and if you want belonging you have to feel understood and it's going to be hard for me to understand why someone says they believe God's word and then oppose everything He says.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. You kind of said, and again feel free to correct me, I heard you say that it depended on the church body, in particular to the lesbian scenario as to whether they would belong or not, or feel belonging, why does it depend on the church that they go to?

Respondent: Because so many churches these days are fine with whatever. And there's so many churches that are flying the gay pride flag and they're just starting to allow these things that they probably would have said "No I'm not okay with this" before, there's just becoming so much flexibility and leeway in what they're saying, and pastors aren't saying the truth, which is sad.

Interviewer: And the problem in that scenario or that situation is the truth value, is that what I'm hearing? It has a truth value, and for those people to belong they have to align with the truth value of a certain type of church?

Respondent: Mm hmm. I think so.

Interviewer: I don't want to put words in your mouth.

Respondent: No, yeah.

Interviewer: Ok. Again, going back to some of these factors that decrease a sense of belonging, two different questions- do these factors actually harm the community of faith? And if so, how? And then do these factors harm the individuals of faith, and if so, how?

Respondent: For sure the individual. There's always going to be a consequence for sin and usually the consequence of sin is going to harm the person that's causing the sin or doing the sin mostly, but it can also affect other people, it can cause hurt in their life, especially if they're the one sinned against. But I don't think sin confines itself to the person committing the sin, it can spread out, so yeah it could affect the congregation.

Interviewer: Ok. On that piece, the individual is hurt by the consequence of sin, so all of the variables that we mentioned, or that I heard mentioned regarding barriers to belonging, are equated to sin, so is sin the matter that limits connectedness and belonging?

Respondent: Maybe, not always. Like the racial issue, that's obviously not sin, I'm just saying that like, I don't know, so much talk about racism these days, I don't feel it but I'm sure minorities do, so I think maybe she feels less connected because of that, but it's not sin.

Interviewer: Ok.

Respondent: And then just like laziness. I don't know if laziness is necessarily a sin, but, well, I don't know. Sorry I'm an external processor and I'm just like "I don't know, I haven't been asked these questions before."

Interviewer: Awesome. Cool, so would you like to add any additional thoughts regarding connectedness or belonging?

Respondent: No, I don't think so. I am curious about what you're getting at with this though, so once you're done asking questions I'm curious what your hypothesis is and what you're trying to prove.

Interviewer: Sure, well that's all I have so I'll stop recording.

RESPONDENT N43

Interviewer: For tracking purposes this is respondent N43. I have three scenarios I am going to go through. They describe different people who participate in their faith community. After each scenario I will ask the following two questions, one at a time. The first question, what in the scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? And the second question will be what in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? Do you have any questions before you start?

Respondent: Nah, go for it.

Interviewer: Alright here we go, scenario number one. I am going to describe two people here. These individuals are a committed couple of ten years. They are married and have a marriage license. They have one son. One individual is a teacher and one individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every week. They do tithe 10%. They do not hold leadership positions in the church. They attend a small group every week and they show personal affection in public at church. So, the first question would be what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: So, like what from their lives do I think is increasing that, is that what you're asking?

Interviewer: Yeah, from the scenario in particular, what increases their sense of belonging and connectedness?

Respondent: Yeah, I would say going to church in general, but especially being in a small group, a smaller community, I think would increase their feeling of involvement. I think when it comes to giving money, usually something that you're donating to is something you feel connected to, hopefully. And I do think it might be easier to feel plugged in as a married unit or if you have a kid that's going to a group with other kids so it might be easier to feel plugged in being more than just one person.

Interviewer: Cool. Second question, what in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Well maybe the exact opposite of what I just said. Having a child or being married adds a lot of time restrictions with what you're free to do with other people or nap schedules, things of that nature. And then they seem to have jobs that probably are high demand, especially some parts of the year with lots of hours you have to work or weird hours, especially if you're a nurse or… Probably make it feel like it's harder to find time to do something the church might be organizing.

Interviewer: Awesome. I now have more information about this scenario. The couple described above is a lesbian couple, one woman is a Christian and one woman is not a Christian. Both women are white or Caucasian and they want their son to be raised in a faith community. The first question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: You said one is Christian and one is not?

Interviewer: Correct.

Respondent: Well, I think a desire to want a child to grow up a certain way will probably increase the feeling that you belong because I imagine you'd be in a group that would have similar thoughts about that, most likely if you're in a church group. That might be it for the increase, probably, in this scenario.

Interviewer: So, the second question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community.

Respondent: I would say in general being a lesbian couple might make it less likely to feel like you're a part of a lot of church groups or that you're the same as everyone else in a group. I think having one person who believes and one who does not, I think more tension in family decision making but also just how much do you prioritize something like a church community compared to other communities. So yeah, I think the extra information would make it overall more difficult to make you feel like you belong in a faith community.

Interviewer: Great. Now I have a second scenario and I will ask the same two following questions after the scenario. So, scenario two, this person is 34 years old. She is a single female. She is a dentist. She serves in the Navy Reserves. She is a classically trained piano player. She lives in New York City, New York. She works in public health to provide dental care to the homeless. She tithes 10% of her dental and Navy income to the church and she is unmarried. First question- what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Yeah, the same thing, hopefully with giving money, hopefully there's a connection to charitable donation and what I'm giving to to make you feel connected there. I would like to think something like serving the homeless community would make you feel connected with the faith-based community; that might depend, I suppose, on where you live. Hopefully, there would be other faith-based groups that are doing a similar type of thing or would support her in that. So yeah, I'm trying to think what else. Those are the first two that come to mind.

Interviewer: Great. Second question again, what in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: From my experience being single can often lead to make it more difficult in a church community, depending on where you live. Hopefully, New York City would be a more thriving young population than Laramie, Wyoming. But that can be difficult, there can be a lot of splitting up of groups between married or not married, things of that nature in a church. Yeah, that's all I've got.

Interviewer: Awesome. I now have more information about this scenario. She is Asian-American and is adopted from Korea. She lives with her significant other. She attends two different

churches about one time per month each. She tithes 10% but only tithes to one of the churches she attends. She hops between churches so she can play piano and serve on different worship teams. First question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: In general, I think you have a church or faith community where you have an active role in it, like playing the piano or something like that, I think would increase your feeling of being connected there. Which will probably be very shortly a flip side of my opinion on the other question. But I think in general, I know for me it's been the experience of having more of a role where I'm serving or helping with something, I feel more involved in that community. And that would probably be the one that would jump.

Interviewer: Great. Second question, considering the additional personal information, what in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Yeah, I think with the playing piano, switching between multiple churches, I think it would be hard to feel as connected to either. It happens a lot with students in the Navs. We always encourage people to pick, over time probably pick one ministry to be a part of or to be a leader or something like that because there'll be conflicting events and time commitments and stuff like that. I think there's probably some people that if you're living with a significant other that's not your spouse might feel, might be more likely to feel judged or challenged on that depending on your faith community. I don't have obviously any experience being Asian-American but as far as I know, I think hopefully somewhere like living in New York City, probably more diverse of a population than my experience here, however being in an ethnic minority group you're probably a lot more aware of the people around me, is this group like me or not. And so, I think that could make it difficult if she were the only one or one of a few Asian-Americans at a certain church.

Interviewer: Great. Now I have a third and final scenario and will ask the same two questions following this scenario. This person is a seminary student. This person is 28 years old and is a male. He is serving as a youth pastor at his local church. He teaches Sunday School to junior and senior high students. He highlights diversity in the church by introducing various Gospel worship styles. He attends church three times per week. He leads and participates in short term mission trips. He wants to be an elder in the church. He is unmarried. First question, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community.

Respondent: Yeah, sounds like he's very, maybe his whole life is there at the church. So having a leadership position, serving in that church, being there frequently, I would say, I'd imagine he'd feel pretty connected and a part of the community there. Maybe even responsible for making community, especially with high school and junior high students. From the scenario you described it sounds likely that a lot of his friends or social contacts might also be there. I don't know that I guess but that's what I would assume. So, I'd imagine he feels very connected there because it seems to be taking up the majority of his time.

Interviewer: Second question, what in this scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Sometimes having a leadership position or being responsible for other people in an official capacity can make it more of a lonely position, rather just feeling I'm here to be with people, I'm here to make sure it goes well can fell less of it's my community and more of it's my responsibility. I think having everything in such an official capacity which I speak from experience here can make it feel less like it's just my community and more of intermixed with this is my job, and that can make it harder to feel a part of the community.

Interviewer: Great. I now have more information about this scenario. He does identify as straight. He is a Nigerian immigrant and grew up as a farmer. He lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. He dates on Hinge and Tinder and will sometimes spend the night with his dates. He'll go to a club on Friday or Saturday night with friends. He occasionally drinks and partakes in medical marijuana for anxiety. He does not tithe to any church. He does not participate in Sabbath rest. First question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: What an interesting guy! I want to hang out with that guy. I think what would increase his sense of belonging, let's see. I don't know if anything you described, off the top of my head, would increase.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: I'll go with that.

Interviewer: Second question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario decreases a sense of connectedness and belonging in a faith community?

Respondent: Probably a good bit of what you said, in my mind, would make this guy feel more of a unique member of a community rather than just one of everybody else. Did you say where he lives?

Interviewer: Yeah, he lives in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Respondent: You're right, I forgot about that. Well Salt Lake City, Utah, he'd probably be in the minority, not only being Nigerian but not being white, not being Mormon. Maybe not because it's a big city, Salt Lake, but overall, it's not often known as much of a… If you're not in the Mormon church you might feel like you're an outcast a little bit, unless he's in there, I don't know. But yeah, probably choosing to do things that might, that would probably go against the moral guidelines of a Christian community like sleeping around some or getting drunk, things like that, would probably lead you more to feel like "I'm not the same as everybody else in this group." For better or for worse. So yeah, I think most of what you described, in my mind would probably, unless he found a church or a community that would agree with a lot of his convictions, he would probably feel like "I can do my best to help here, but I'm not the same as everyone else."

Interviewer: You mentioned moral guidelines of the church, can you explain what you mean by that?

Respondent: Yeah, I would say when it comes to drinking and partying or excessive drinking, I would say when it comes to stuff like casual sex or kind of dating apps, maybe that's mainly what I'm meaning; tend to be sticking points for a lot of people, interpreting what does the Bible say about this. So probably those would be the main two things.

Interviewer: Do you think, specifically to the dating app perspective, is there a problem in the church with dating apps themselves, or with how people behave with dating apps?

Respondent: Yeah, good question. I think probably not, I guess I don't know, but I would probably say not a general push against them as a whole, but probably the intention of am I using this to find some sort of life partner? Am I using this for a more casual hook up type of relationships? Those are some conversations I've had with students. With something like Tinder, can you justify, do you think you're trying to find a suitable mate or a real partner here, or do you just want to have a good time? Own up to why you're using it, be honest you know. But honestly probably more the intent of, there's a stigma probably with dating apps and online dating in general, probably still as a general culture, but probably still in Christian culture I'd bet maybe even more. But probably more the intent of a lot of the apps tend to be used, or at least the perception is they tend to be used probably for more casual hook ups rather than more intentional relationships.

Interviewer: Great. So going back to some of the variables that you mentioned that decrease a sense of belonging such as drinking, dating on apps, maybe not being from the same area or looking the same, maybe not tithing, I think you mentioned the lesbian couple not fitting in. So, some of those different variables, why do these variables in particular decrease a sense of belonging?

Respondent: I think they, hopefully should not, I think if we're doing what we're called to do well they should not, however we are not perfect and so they, I think they tend to because… Oh boy, how long do we have to talk here? I think if I were to summarize a general American Christian culture, I think there has been a shift away from, in general, how do we follow what Jesus has done, and more of a shift towards we are trying to create a certain culture, a certain lifestyle, and I think there's been an intermix with how do we not lose cultural power or political power, and with that comes a general, yeah I think a push for everyone to agree on things and to kind of choose sides of you're either like us or you're not like us. Either get on board with what we're doing or find some other group. I think Christianity, like a lot of issues, a lot of groups right now, here's us and then here's our enemy. I think unfortunately as a culture we've shifted more and more towards viewing certain people and then parts of culture as our enemy rather than people created in the image of God. The result of that long loop around, a lot of faith organizations or groups will still be fairly judgmental and might have a difficult time helping people feel like they belong that disagree with them. I think I would like that to not be the case, but I think people that disagree on moral issues, people that look different than you, people that interpret the Bible differently than you, I think there's been more of a push to, in general, gather people together that agree on things. Unfortunately, we're, the Church is right along with

everyone else with that. So yeah, there's still just a sense of judgment and you kind of need to transform to be more like whoever "us" is, which would probably tend to be a majority white culture oftentimes.

Interviewer: You talked about sameness a little bit more there, groups of people gathering together. Were you referring to the church or were you referring to something different?

Respondent: Probably most times I'm thinking of churches, churches are in my world, or parachurch organizations. But I'm probably mostly thinking of church groups because you have so many options, most cities and towns you're in there's so many options for different churches. Each of them are all going to be groups, so I think I'm mainly referring to different local churches when I think of that.

Interviewer: So, what's the impact of sameness within the church if groups forming around sameness in different churches, what's the impact on the church?

Respondent: I think it's a negative impact, I think in my mind there's not much difference between Christians and non-Christians really. I think there should be some sort of difference, all being Christians, all having the Holy Spirit, there should be some sort of unifying factor that is different compared to the world around you and if all of our churches split up into only people who think like you or look like you or act like you, we could still say we're all a part of the same body of Christ, but then we're maybe not living that out in a way that's visible or real. And so, some of that's natural, we're all humans, we're all going to tend to interact with people like us or that agree with us on things often, but as a whole I think it's a negative impact because it can really pigeon whole our view of what is God doing in this world. A pigeonholed view of what a Christian should look like can lead to a lot of false doctrine or false things that aren't important that we think are really important. So, I'd say overall it has a pretty negative impact.

Interviewer: So, I guess coming off that, that's a little bit the same as my next question but going back again to the factors that you kind of mentioned that decrease belonging or connectedness, does that harm the community of faith? And if so, how does it harm the community of faith?

Respondent: Are you asking the idea of sameness? Or what are you asking again?

Interviewer: You started to answer it in that question, I think, about sameness. It's almost the same question but looking a little more at the factors that you identified, so looking at the gay couple or the living with a partner or some of the like overworking or being in a leadership role that pulls you out of the community. I guess my question is do those factors actually harm the church as a whole or do they not impact the church?

Respondent: Yeah I think they do harm the church because… One thing that comes to mind is often it can lead to certain people seeming like our enemies that are not our enemies. I think by having a large group of people that maybe don't feel welcome it's been easy to view them like they aren't really with us when in fact they are and we can very likely be mistreating our brothers and sisters in Christ but we may not think we are because they're not with us, they're not in our group, which I think we see happening a lot overall right now. I think it's harmful because we

end up, I mean in a way we end up hurting ourselves without realizing it, and we lose our standing in the world around us but we also end up putting down the people that are with us. Sometimes knowingly, honestly, but sometimes unknowingly thinking about it.

Interviewer: Would you like to add any additional thoughts regarding connectedness or belonging?

Respondent: Let me think. Not really. This is good to think through, this is a good exercise for me to think through in my current position. But yeah I think there's a lot of things that, it's easy to be critical of the church and I think as a whole we deserve to have some criticism, we should be thinking why do we do what we do and thinking through it. And so, my hope is a lot of these things aren't true, and I don't know if it represents… The only comment I'd add is I don't know how much this represents the Church outside of Western culture or the United States. I don't know if this would be the same if I was at a church in Africa or in South America or Asia. My only additional comment would be this is my experience from being an American being involved in faith communities.

Interviewer: Yes we're definitely set in the Western Church. Good point. Alright cool, I'm going to go ahead and end this recording.

RESPONDENT N7

Interviewer: Awesome. So, this shouldn't take too long, today's interview should only take about 15 minutes. The interview is being recorded. Your name and any personal information will be redacted from the transcript. For data tracking purposes the department's tracking number is N7. I have three scenarios that I want to go through with you. The following three scenarios describe people who participate in their faith community. After each scenario I will ask the following two questions, one at a time. The first question, what in the scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? And the second question, what in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? Do you have any questions before we start?
Respondent: I mean the questions that I have aren't really related to the survey itself. I was curious how you heard about the Navs or how are you connected to them or how I got asked to be a part of this.
Interviewer: Sure. So, I used to be involved with Navs as well. I was in Navigators at the University of Wyoming during my undergrad, which is where I met Adam Spurling who's now the current Edge[?] director. I was associated with the military navigators when I was in the military and so Adam has been helping me just connect with different people through the navigators so we were looking at people who might not be involved with Navs anymore that were a part of Edge, so that's how it all came to be.
Respondent: Alright cool.
Interviewer: Yeah small world I guess. Cool. So, the first scenario I will describe two individuals here. These individuals are a committed couple of ten years. They are married with a marriage license. They have one son. One individual is a teacher and one other individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every week. They do tithe 10%. They do not hold leadership positions in the church. They attend a small group every week. They participate in communion weekly and

they show personal affection in public at church. The first question would be what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: Could you repeat it all again? Sorry.
Interviewer: No, you're fine. Scenario one. These individuals are a committed couple of ten years. They are married with a marriage license. They have one son. One individual is a teacher and one individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every week. They tithe 10%. They do not hold leadership positions in the church. They attend a small group weekly. They participate in communion weekly. They show personal affection in public at church.
Respondent: So, increases a sense of belonging, that's the question.
Interviewer: Yes. What in this scenario increases a sense of belonging?
Respondent: I think the frequency of interacting with other members of the faith community, of the church, would increase it. So, I think at the top of the list would be involvement in a small group, quickly followed by attending church weekly because you need time with people in order to have connection with them and belong with them. I also think that if taught correctly, if the corporal aspect of it is stressed, taking communion weekly will bond people together because this is one body. And tithing will form a sense of connectedness like it's an investment in this community, they're willing to put some skin in the game as it were. So those are the things that stand out to me and kind of in that order.
Interviewer: The priority would be to first participate in a small group. Second attend church every weekend and then tithe, as far as importance?
Respondent: I mean I think of the things that were listed those were the most... yeah I guess important or most effective for getting a sense of belonging to the church itself or the faith community.
Interviewer: Alright, great. Second question, what in this scenario decreases the sense of belonging and connectedness to the faith community?
Respondent: I mean I don't know if there's anything that actively decreases it. Living in a rural community might make isolation more prevalent. Or it might make people more united so I don't think there's any factor or any circumstance that you listed that actively hinders church connections.
Interviewer: Alright. I now have more information about this scenario that I will give you and then will ask the same questions based on the additional personal information. This couple is a lesbian couple, one woman is a Christian and one woman is not a Christian. Both women are white or Caucasian and they want their son to be raised in a faith community. Considering the additional personal information in this scenario, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community, if anything?
Respondent: I don't know how that would affect it. I mean it would affect what type of faith community that they could feel belong to so the beliefs and practices of that particular faith community but other than that I don't know.
Interviewer: Alright, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario decreases a sense of belonging?

Respondent: I don't know, I mean… Once again, yeah it would only affect which kind or type of faith community that the couple could join, assuming they're in one that they're accepted in, then yeah I can't see any difference.

Interviewer: Alright, awesome. I have a second scenario and will ask the same two questions following this scenario. This person is 34 years old; she is a single female; she is a dentist. She serves in the Navy Reserves. She is a classically trained piano player. She lives in New York City, New York. She works in public health to provide dental care to the homeless. She tithes 10% of her dental and Navy income to the church. She is unmarried. First question, what in this scenario increases the sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: Sorry, say it again. I know I was supposed to be listening, I was just trying to get a grasp on it.
Interviewer: No worries. This person is 34 years old; she is a single female; she is a dentist. She serves in the Navy Reserves. She is a classically trained piano player. She lives in New York City, New York. She works in public health to provide dental care to the homeless. She tithes 10% of her dental and Navy income to the church and she is unmarried.
Respondent: What increases her belonging to a faith community?
Interviewer: Correct.
Respondent: I mean of the things that were listed, tithing would increase a sense of connection I think, yeah.
Interviewer: Alright. What in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: I think there's a tendency for it to be more difficult for single people to feel connected with communities of faith so I would say her being single especially at the age of 34, as unfortunate and bad as that is, the older you are and single the more difficult it is to connect. I think being in the Navy Reserves, although many people would admire that and it's a good thing, that if that person is deployed or on assignment for a month or whatever that it would interrupt the weekly, you know, regular communion with fellow people so that could make it hard to connect.
Interviewer: Right. I now have more information about this scenario. She is an Asian-American and is adopted from Korea. She lives with her significant other. She attends two different churches about once per month each. She tithes 10% but only tithes to one of the churches that she attends. She hops between churches so she can play piano and serve on different worship teams. Considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: I wouldn’t say any of the additional information increases belongingness.
Ok. Does any of the additional personal information decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness?
Respondent: Yeah, I think splitting time between two different churches makes it hard to connect because you’re trying to, yeah, trying to find a kind of stable home and be known by people. Also, only once a month at either one, that's a problem. Also living with a significant other. Once again, it depends on the church and their doctrine but it might put stress on that person's conscience so they don't feel like they belong at church.
Interviewer: Now I have a third and final scenario and will ask the same two questions. This person is a seminary student. This person is 28 years old and is a male. He is serving as a youth pastor at his local church. He teaches Sunday School to junior and senior high students. He highlights diversity in the church by introducing various Gospel worship styles. He attends church three times per week. He leads and participates in short term mission trips. He wants to be an elder in the church. He is unmarried. First question, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community.

Respondent: I'm going to do it again, I'm sorry.
Interviewer: All good. This person is a seminary student, just like you. This person is 28 years old and is a male. He is serving as a youth pastor at his local church. He teaches Sunday School to junior and senior high students. He highlights diversity in the church by introducing various Gospel worship styles. He attends church three times per week. He leads and participates in short term missions trips. He wants to be an elder in the church and he is unmarried.
Respondent: I think, I'm just imagining if you're teaching middle school and high school students and you connect with them and have good relationships, that makes you feel connected. And also going on mission trips with people and spending a week with people, you come to know them pretty well so I'm kind of emphasizing things that form relationships. On that list I think that would be the two things that would increase a sense of belonging. Actually, to add to that, a desire to be an elder because you start to be personally sorta invested in the denomination or the congregation itself so I think that will increase a sense of belonging as well.
Interviewer: Great. Second question, what in this scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: At the same time wanting to be an elder you see how the sausage is made basically, and that can turn you off toward the uglier parts of church life, governance and policy and stuff like that. Being a seminary student also isn't, it can feel like you're in a different class and people treat you differently. Three times a week seems a bit excessive so that might, they might just get worn out so…
Interviewer: Alright. Sounds good. I now have more information about this scenario. The individual, he identifies as straight. He is a Nigerian immigrant and grew up as a farmer. He lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. He dates on Hinge and Tinder and will sometimes spend the night with his dates. He'll go to a club on Friday or Saturday night with his friends. He occasionally drinks and occasionally partakes in medical marijuana for anxiety. He does not tithe to any church. He does not participate in Sabbath rest. Considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario increases a sense of connectedness and belonging in a faith community?
Respondent: I can't think of anything in the added information that increases belonging.
Interviewer: What about the additional personal information decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: I think it's an interesting cocktail combining with this sort of youth pastor, three times a week, wants to be an elder, that there is such a... conscience would be very conflicted, living a double life because of the dating and staying over and stuff like that. Also, three times a week, no Sabbath rest, running yourself ragged so… As much as I wouldn't want it to detract from feeling like you belong, being from another country, being from an African country, being a farmer in America, and in a big city would also probably detract from a sense of belonging. You know, you wouldn't feel like people understood you so... I wouldn't want to be in that situation.
Interviewer: Ha, me neither. Alright. Just a few follow-up questions. Of the variables you mentioned regarding things that decrease a sense of belonging, you kind of talked through it a little bit, I'm a little curious maybe why some of these variables would decrease a sense of belonging.
Respondent: Can you give examples?
Interviewer: Sure, so let's go back to, so for example talking about in scenario two, the woman going in between churches and not committing necessarily to one church and really only going one time per month as an example. You kind of start to talk a little bit about why that would

detract, you mentioned commitment. Do you find commitment would detract from belonging or is there more to that?
Respondent: I think commitment would be a part of it but if we think of a feeling of belonging coming from knowing other people and being known by them and being a regular member or participant in activities that frequency, frequency of touch points of time spent with others will have an important impact so to see someone just once a month you wouldn't feel like you knew them or had much interaction with them. So I think mainly I'm thinking of number of touch points or frequency of involvement but I do think that churches operate well and people feel belonging when they operate like they're a family so that means that you have only one family and it can be large and extended but you have to choose one and you commit to it and you enter reciprocity with the other participants in that particular group. So yeah I think time spent is necessary for relationship building, that would be the first thing but I do think commitment and reciprocity would lead to a sense of belonging.
Interviewer: So, do you think that any of the factors or variables that decreased a sense of belonging harmed the community of faith? And if they do, how?
Respondent: What do you mean by harm the community of faith?
Interviewer: So, do you think that it brings harm to the greater community of the church to have these individuals participating in activities that decrease belonging?
Respondent: That's an interesting, kinda tricky question because it depends on your sort of model for church life. Do you, I don't want to, you know if someone's coming once a month to a worship service and that's it, I would have a really serious conversation with them about becoming a church member but I wouldn't bar them from attending a church service and in so like, non-believers are welcome at worship services. So, I'm operating from a church model that has a wide-open front door to attendance and a somewhat smaller door to membership and a much smaller door to leadership. So, I think it's more damaging to the individual in situation two that we're talking about, the person that's going to two different churches once a month in New York. It's more damaging to her than to either of the churches that she is going to. It might, it might damage some people who want to build a friendship or relationship with her, to like to think of her as a fellow participant and then to be disappointed with how much time and availability they actually get, but I actually think the individual is harmed more than that church itself, in situation two at least, I guess.
Interviewer: You mentioned membership, do you think the church membership increases or decreases a sense of belonging?
Respondent: I think when well explained and construed and when done well yes.
Interviewer: How do you define well explained?
Respondent: For a long time, I thought membership was just like just so that you can get a vote at meetings and it was like just, I thought membership as not materially different from being an attender so I'm like why would I do that? But to think of it sort of in covenantal terms of joining and its instantiation of God's people and to be held accountable and to enter into a committed family relationship with one another, stuff like that is a good view of membership.
Interviewer: Awesome. Do you want to add any additional thoughts regarding connectedness or belonging?
Respondent: I mean I guess one of things that stood out to me from the questions, or two things: one, the frequency or number of touch points, being involved in a small group, being weekly are important. And then the other thing is like duplicity and hiding in a troubled conscience, a

divided heart. The part in 1 John if we walk in the light as He is in light we have fellowship with one another. So that psychologically might be a hindrance to a sense of belonging.
Interviewer: Awesome. Well, I really appreciate your time today. Thanks for sharing your thoughts, you're obviously a very thoughtful individual. Very good, well that's all I had for you.

RESPONDENT N92

Interviewer: Sweet, for tracking purposes I am conversing with respondent N92. Awesome, I have three scenarios where I will describe people who participate in their faith community. After each of these scenarios I will ask the following two questions, one at a time. The first question, what in the scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? And the second question will be what in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? Do you have any questions before you start?

Respondent: No, I think I understand.

Interviewer: Awesome. If you do have any questions feel free to stop and ask, no problem. Alright so scenario one I am going to describe a couple of individuals here. These individuals are a committed couple of ten years. They are married and have a marriage license. They have one son. One individual is a teacher and the other individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every week. They tithe 10%. They do not hold leadership positions in the church. They do attend a small group every week. They participate in communion every week and they show personal affection in public at church. So, the first question would be what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Yeah I think being in a small group helped. And then attending church every-regularly helps make you feel a sense of community. And probably the small-town nature, it sounds like they're from a rural small town so they probably know most of the people nearby.

Interviewer: Alright, second question, what in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Sometimes there's a pressure where if you're not leading you're not doing enough. Maybe they would feel like because they aren't leaders they might feel undervalued.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. I now have more information about this scenario. This couple is a lesbian couple, one woman is a Christian and one woman is not a Christian. Both women are white or Caucasian and they want their son to be raised in a faith community. So, the first question will be considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? If anything?

Respondent: Yeah I think… I think it'd be hard. I think some people would really be behind them, I think there would be a few people that would really want their son to know the Lord so they'd help to be really supportive and try to make them feel welcome.

Interviewer: Alright, and the second question considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community.

Respondent: Yeah I think one person being a believer and one person not being a believer is hard, so kind of not all in together, and then being a same sex attracted couple isn't always accepted so that would probably make them feel like outcasts.

Interviewer: Alright, awesome, thank you. Now I have a second scenario and I will ask the same two questions following this scenario. In this scenario the person is 34 years old, she's a female and a dentist. She serves in the Navy Reserves. She is a classically trained piano player. She lives in New York City, New York. She works in public health to provide dental care to the homeless. She gives 10% of her dental and Navy income to the church. She is unmarried. So, the first question: What in this scenario would increase the sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Yeah so it sounds like she gives a lot. Because she's a dentist but she gives, instead of being a private dentist and making more money she works in the public sector. I'm sure that would give her a sense of helping and probably help build connections with a faith community.

Interviewer: Alright. What in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think sometimes there's a weird like, in the Christian community you need to get married early. So sometimes I feel like if you don't, if you're not married by the time you're 30 there must be something wrong with you. You're not like a good Christian woman so maybe that could be a thing.

Interviewer: Yeah. Alright. I now have more information about this scenario. She is Asian-American and is adopted from Korea. She lives with her significant other. She attends two different churches about one time per month each. She tithes 10% but only tithes to one of the churches that she attends. She hops between churches so she can play piano and serve on different worship teams. Considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think being on the worship team. Worship teams would probably make her feel an increased connection.

Interviewer: Awesome. Considering the increased personal information, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Not regularly attending church would probably decrease. Also, I think if people found out she was living with her significant other, I think people would probably look down on that in the faith-based community. I think that would decrease.

Interviewer: Alright, thank you. Now I have a third and final scenario here. This person is a seminary student. This person is 28 years old and is a male. He is serving as a youth pastor at his local church. He teaches Sunday School to junior and senior high students. He highlights diversity in the church by introducing various worship styles. He attends church three times per week. He leads and participates in short term mission trips. He wants to be an elder in the church and he is unmarried. So, first question: What in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community.

Respondent: He just seems very involved. Like because he works there it sounds like most of his time is going there so his community is just there.

Interviewer: Alright. And what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: It sounds like he's pretty interested in diversity and pushing that, so maybe if he feels like he isn't seeing progress or is the only person pushing for it, that could decrease

Interviewer: Awesome. I now have more information about this scenario. He does identify as straight. He is a Nigerian immigrant and grew up as a farmer. He now lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. He dates on Hinge and sometimes Tinder and will occasionally spend the night with his dates. He'll go to a club on Friday or Saturday night with his friends. He will occasionally drink and occasionally partake in medical marijuana for his anxiety. He does not tithe to any church. He does not participate in Sabbath rest. So, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of connectedness and belonging in a faith community?

Respondent: I think being a straight male probably helps. Also being a Nigerian immigrant. I think sometimes in the faith community it's like, they feel they want to see diversity, so it might make him feel valued.

Interviewer: Okay. Considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of connectedness and belonging in a faith community?

Respondent: I think spending the night with women will probably make him feel decreased attachment, decreased belonging. Also, medical marijuana and drinking; that would make him feel less attached. Make him feel less like he fit in.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. Thank you. So going back to some of the variables that you mentioned that would decrease a sense of belonging- I know that you mentioned it kind of depends on the people they're around regarding the lesbian couple, maybe the expectation to get married early as a single female, diversity could potentially decrease, spending the night with dates, drinking and marijuana. Why do these specific variables decrease a sense of belonging in your mind?

Respondent: I think they decrease a sense of belonging because they're viewed as sin. Some of them are sin and frowned upon in the church, so because of that they feel like they're doing something wrong and don't belong. Because there's an expectation to do what's right. Some of

them are a little bit more cloudy than others. But some things in general in the church world are not accepted. Like the lesbian couple is a lot harder, I think that's a pretty political and fiery issue. So I don't think people see the people involved in it, they see the issue they're fighting for. So, I think because people are fighting for an issue, an idea, it's harder to see people and that makes people feel less attached.

Interviewer: So, the individuals behaving in that way, or being the person that they think they need to be, you think it's harder for them to belong because they're being told that their behavior is sin or that's just the perception from the community or.. Yeah just getting a little bit of clarification on that.

Respondent: I think a little bit of both. They're being told what they're doing is wrong. If it comes out. So, either they're hiding it and people don't know and they feel like they have a secret or if people found out somebody might say something about what they're doing is wrong. So, then I guess shame, but also then the perceived notion of being in the culture of the church, of fitting into a mold.

Interviewer: What do you think that mold is?

Respondent: I think sometimes that church culture mold is like, when you're a little older being married, volunteering, giving, you know having certain hobbies and doing certain things and not doing certain things. I don't know. Like some things are more forgivable. Like if a guy is sleeping with girls it's a little more forgivable than if someone is a lesbian. But just a culture to fit in to this perfect Christian ideal. Which isn't necessarily what the Bible says but kind of how church culture is built.

Interviewer: Where do you think that comes from?

Respondent: I think there's an intention to do what is good, and to see what is good. Like a husband is seen as good by individuals, but what is good for those individuals or what's good culturally. So, to me, lots of times white men are the ones who have been in charge so what they've seen as good in their eyes. Being like, you know, it's kind of made the standard across so sometimes it just misses cultural norms. But then there's also, there is a truth, that there is a good, like a baseline of what the Bible says is good, but sometimes the Bible is interpreted in a way that may not be completely true.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's a fine line. So, on that topic of the white male being in charge of the culture, of the expectation of what is good, you mentioned that diversity in and of itself could decrease belonging, is there a relation between those two statements or why would diversity decrease belonging or a desire to bring diversity into an environment.

Respondent: Yeah, in my time with the [Organization Name]**,** I felt like diverse students that I would meet with and that were involved in the ministry didn't necessarily fit the culture. And it's not that sin was running rampant in their life, it's just the positive aspects that were looked in, the leaders didn't always translate one to one so if there was an intentional leadership among the

students or staff to reach out towards those people they wouldn't feel like they fit in or they belonged.

Interviewer: So, there was a gap between the, what, I guess, I don't want to put words in your mouth. So, I guess what was the gap between, say [Organization Name] and the diverse cultures that you were trying to reach out to?

Respondent: Yeah, I think it's complex in so many ways. For example [Organization Name] has, it's like an abbreviation. It's like F.A.T.- Faithful, Available, Teachable. It's when you're looking for someone to disciple, you're trying to find someone who's those things. But in reality we're going to be biased on those things. So, we're going to look at someone who's faithful like we are, available like we are, so it kinda makes it look like we are looking for people who are like us. So, it leads to minorities not being the first choice for leadership positions or minorities not being the first disciple because there are differences, you know. So, in minority culture I don't know if it's normal to just go to a coffee shop once a week and talk, But that could be viewed as oh this person is not faithful. But trying to meet people where they're at and their culture and what they do, I think sometimes that gap causes a divide. So. And that's just a small example of like that is compounded, those small differences are compounded to make a big difference so.

Interviewer: Yeah. You kind of said, if I heard you right, you said we are looking for people who are like us and that causes some of the tension between a culture where you go to a coffee shop and sit down once a week and a culture where you only drink coffee in the morning because you just need to wake up or I don't know, who knows. But why do we, I guess why do we only look for people who are like us?

Respondent: Well, we just don't have perspective, you know. I think to every person they're the hero of their own story, so I think we have this idea of discipleship and passing on this mission the [Organization Name] are about and the Great Commission and discipleship, we are looking for someone we can pass it on to. But I think when we look for people to pass that on to, we just look for, we look for ourselves. We're also looking for something easy. If I find someone who has all the same hobbies as me, if I find somebody who... it's easy to understand, it's not a lot of work to fully understand where they're coming from and their perspective, it's just easier in so many ways. So, I think it's natural to gravitate towards that than it is to talk to somebody different than you, somebody who you don't understand where they're coming from. Because I think, with the [Organization Name] it's like a discipleship relationship and often times it's viewed like I am teaching them, but it's hard if I'm teaching them and there's things I don't understand about them or things I need to learn from them, so I think sometimes it's just easier to meet with somebody who, and it's cleaner that way. I think lots of times people are just looking for clean.

Interviewer: Awesome. There's a lot in there. So, these factors that would kind of limit connectedness or belonging in a faith community, do you think they harm the actual church or community of faith?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: How so?

Respondent: Yeah I think God is a God about all people, and that he says that throughout the Bible, Old Testament and New Testament, He promises to bring all people to him. And I also believe that when we, in Revelation, it talks about the multitudes, the masses praising Him in every tongue, like diversity is not lost in heaven. It's not washed away, it's kept, so there's value in it and it matters. But if we, we're supposed to be a representation of the church here on Earth, but if we can't relate and we can't talk and we can't make people feel valued and we can't see people for where they are, then we will never see the Great Commission fulfilled. But I know also, when you look at Paul's ministry he would go to a city, build up believers and then those believers would spread the word from the city. And I think sometimes that there are places where only certain people can go. Like, in an Asian American community it might have to be an Asian American who goes in and shares his faith and loves those people and shares the Gospel with them and that might be something that only an Asian-American can do, not a white person or black person or Hispanic person. So, if we're not intentional about building up believers of different ethnicities and empowering them, and not just empowering them but empowering them in their culture and not stripping away their culture that would make them go back to their communities.

Interviewer: So, if I heard you right, please correct me if I didn't, it hurts the community of faith because it misses out on the God of all people and misses out on the fulfillment of God calling all people to his church.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you think that these barriers are hurting the people that are being kept out, or not the people who are being kept out but the people who are feeling marginalized more or the same or less than the harm that is being caused to the community of faith.

Respondent: I mean I think more because it's the Gospel and this is the thing that every person is actually looking for. And as the Church our goal is to be, I think Paul talks about how to the Jews as a Jew and to the gentiles as a gentile so he can reach all people for him. But if someone is interested in a church but because of these cultural barriers the Gospel can't penetrate into their heart then that hurts them more because the thing they need the most they can't get.

Interviewer: How do you define the Church?

Respondent: God's people.

Interviewer: Awesome. Would you like to add any additional thoughts regarding connectedness or belonging?

Respondent: No, I think I covered it.

Interviewer: Alright, sounds good.

RESPONDENT O59

Interviewer: Awesome, for data tracking purposes I am conversing with respondent O59. Alright, here we go. I have a few scenarios I am going to describe to you. The following three scenarios describe people who participate in their faith community. After each scenario I will ask the following questions, one at a time. The first question will be what in the scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? The second question will be what in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? Do you have any questions before we start?

Respondent: Nope.

Interviewer: The good news is there's no wrong answers so you can pass this test pretty quickly. Alright this first scenario I'm going to describe a couple of individuals here. Scenario one, these individuals are a committed couple of ten years. They are married and do have a marriage license. They have one son. One individual is a teacher, just like you, and the other individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every week. They tithe 10%. They do not hold leadership positions in the church. They attend a small group every week. They participate in communion every week and they show personal affection in public at church. So, the first question, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: For that couple?

Interviewer: Yeah, out of everything in that scenario does anything stand out to you as something that would increase a sense of belonging?

Respondent: Oh, one of those pieces? That makes it a lot better, I thought it was super open ended. I don't know.

Interviewer: So, these are a little bit more targeted. So out of the scenario that I read.

Respondent: Perfect.

Interviewer: These individuals are a committed couple of ten years. They are married with a marriage license. They have one son. One individual is a teacher and one individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every week. They tithe 10%. They do not hold leadership positions in the church. They attend a small group every week. They participate in communion weekly and they show personal affection in public at church. So, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Um, so I think being a committed couple for ten years would increase the sense of belonging. You said make them feel like they belong more to the community, or make the community think they belong?

Interviewer: It could go either way.

Respondent: So that piece. Having the marriage license. I think having the son also would increase the sense of belonging across the board. And then both of the careers, teaching and nursing, would increase the sense of belonging for them, is my thought. I think that the rural, if all the other members of the church are part of that same rural community, I think that would increase the sense of belonging. If it's more like rural/urban it still can, but not necessarily. And then I think the tithing 10% creates the belonging.

Interviewer: Ok, awesome. The second question, what in this scenario, if anything, decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: The first one, which I think is really sad, is using their skills to adopt and foster. I think from my experience we always praise and hold people that adopt and foster to really high and wonderful things, but it also just, it feels like other families are not exactly with them or they don't have a way to be belonging, in that sense. And then I would also think that depending on the degree, the showing affection to each other in the public, in the church space, would decrease the belonging.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome, thank you. I now have more information about this scenario. This couple is a lesbian couple, one woman is a Christian and one woman is not a Christian. Both women are white or Caucasian and they want their son to be raised in a faith community. So, the first question will be considering the additional personal information I just read, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: If they want their child to be raised in a faith community.

Interviewer: Awesome. Second question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Very certainly the fact that one does not have Christian faith, and then this is, I don't know if this is fair, it's still a little prejudiced but considering Tennessee and what not, I would assume that them being a lesbian couple would decrease a sense of belonging, but I don't know how fair that is.

Interviewer: Ok, great, thank you. Now I have a second scenario and I will ask the same two questions following this scenario. Scenario two, this person is 34 years old, she's a female, she's a dentist. She serves in the Navy Reserves. She is a classically trained piano player. She lives in New York City, New York. She works in public health to provide dental care to the homeless. She tithes 10% of her dental and Navy income to the church. She is unmarried. So, the first

question: What in this scenario would increase the sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think serving in the National Reserves would. The tithing again, the being a dentist, that piece. I'm trying to remember everything else.

Interviewer: Sorry, you said being a dentist?

Respondent: Yes. Oh, being a classically trained pianist, I think definitely would. And… I think that being single would make her more part of the faith community, and I think the homeless outreach would make her have a bigger sense of belonging in the faith community.

Interviewer: Ok, awesome. So, second question, what in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I don't really see anything that would stand out to decrease it.

Interviewer: Ok, awesome. I now have more information about this scenario. She is an Asian-American and is adopted from Korea. She lives with her significant other. She attends two different churches about once per month each. She tithes 10% but only tithes to one church that she attends. She hops between churches so she can play piano and serve on different worship teams. So, the first question would be considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: The playing the piano for all of the different communities and helping in that way. And then that one community, the one church that she's a part of, the tithing there I think would increase the connectedness. I think that's all from the additional information.

Interviewer: Awesome. And the second question, so considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Living with her partner. Possibly being an Asian-American? I would hope not. And then I think not tithing to all of the churches would decrease a sense of belonging for a lot of them. And then also the splitting, going back and forth to different churches would decrease the sense of belonging.

Interviewer: Ok, awesome, thank you. Now I have a third and final scenario and will ask the same two questions following the scenario. Scenario three, this person is a seminary student. This person is 28 years old and is a male. He is serving as a youth pastor at his local church. He teaches Sunday School to junior and senior high students. He highlights diversity in the church by introducing various worship styles. He attends church three times a week. He leads and participates in short term mission trips. He wants to be an elder in the church and he is unmarried. So, first question: What in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community.

Respondent: Being in seminary. Having Sunday School with the junior high students and what not. Going to school, or not school, like attending church and being a part of that community three times a week. And then you said he did mission outreach as well?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: I think that as well. I might be missing some things but…

Interviewer: Do you want me to read it again?

Respondent: Sure, really quickly.

Interviewer: Sire This person is a seminary student. This person is 28 years old and is a male. He is serving as a youth pastor at his local church. He teaches Sunday School to junior and senior high students. He highlights diversity in the church by introducing various worship styles. He attends church three times per week. He leads and participates in short term mission trips. He wants to be an elder in the church and he is unmarried.

Respondent: I think something that would increase the connectedness is the diversity with worship styles, but kind of with a caveat, I think that would be an increased belonging with the majority of people under a certain age group and then maybe cause more issues with people over a certain age group. And then also being the youth pastor would increase belonging in that community.

Interviewer: Awesome. And the second question will be what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Maybe the fact that he's single, I could see that. There could be some concerns then with different parents with him being a youth pastor and all these other things where sometimes they do want people to be married.

Interviewer: Awesome. I now have more information about this scenario. He identifies as straight. He is a Nigerian immigrant and grew up as a farmer. He lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. He dates on Hinge and Tinder and will sometimes spend the night with his dates. He'll go to a club on Friday or Saturday night with his friends. He occasionally drinks and partakes in medical marijuana for anxiety. He does not tithe to any church and he does not participate in Sabbath rest. So, the first question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Identifying as straight. I do have a question, you said he doesn't identify with a specific church?

Interviewer: He does not tithe to any church.

Respondent: Of the additional information that's all I think that would increase belonging.

Interviewer: Great. So, the second question would be considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Being a Nigerian immigrant. Going to the clubs on Friday and Saturday nights and sometimes going to bed with or going to the other person's home. I think that having medical marijuana would also decrease a sense of belonging. And then I think not tithing to any church would be something that would decrease the sense of belonging in that community.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. Thank you. So going back to some of the variables that you mentioned regarding decreasing belonging, some of the things that were mentioned- working with orphans, showing affection in public, maybe not being a Christian, potentially based on the location being a lesbian, living with a partner, ethnicity, going to multiple churches, age group differences, and then singleness showed up once on the increase side and then once on the decrease side, and then tithing showed up several times. So that was just a quick summary of some of the things I noted but based on those variables, why do these variables in particular decrease a sense of belonging?

Respondent: Because a lot of those either are kind of just like not keeping fully with the values of a Christian faith community, and then especially a lot of those are considered wrong in different faith communities like being with partners before marriage and not identifying as straight, and this and that and the other thing. And then this, the ethnicity thing I don't think is people thinking it's wrong, I do feel like there's just, this might just be upbringing but I feel like there's a lot of whitewashing in United States' Christianity. And it's almost like there's token people of color in churches, like there's one person, and so I don't really think that would increase the belonging.

Interviewer: Why did you think in one scenario singleness increased belonging and in one scenario decreased belonging?

Respondent: I was trying to think, so the one was a female, the singleness, and the other was a male. It's hard to tell, both of those I feel like for different people it increases and for different it decreases. Maybe, I think probably, I think back on my upbringing and there were a lot of really, women in my church as a whole in their late 20s and early 30s and were single, and just really definitely had a big culture of belonging around them, and then also brought a lot of other people into it. And then more personally, there were very few males in that type of position and they tended to be more reserved and not someone who would push out and seek to have belonging. And then again there were kind of always, it seemed like it wasn't as much viewed as a spiritual gift like we talked about, it felt like in my upbringing that some people felt like "oh there might be something wrong with him," where it wasn't quite seen that way with the women.

Interviewer: So, going to the lesbian couple in the first scenario, you sort of said it depended on location, and correct me if I'm wrong, but I think you said because of the rural environment in Tennessee they might not be accepted or they might not feel like they belong. Why did you put the caveat on location?

Respondent: So typically, it seems like rural areas are less accepting of people in the LGBTQ community, and then also thinking of, kind of really grassroots Christians are those who tend to be, again, along the lines of people not as accepting of people in the LGBTQ+ community.

Interviewer: So, the grassroot Christians…

Respondent: Well the Christians that tend to be, so I would think that Christianity as a whole is less accepting of people in the LGBTQ+ community, but especially, it seems to me from what I know that the Christians that definitely are going to be less accepting will tend to be in more southern states, they tend to have those more extra conservative interpretations of the Bible and really rigid interpretations.

Interviewer: So, is acceptance of the term, as you're using it, acceptance of LGBT, a precursor for a LGBT person to feel like they belong or accepted?

Respondent: I would think so. I would feel like if there's anything, I think for myself, if there's anything, if there's any part of my life that's a pretty, I mean it's not all of who you are but it's a pretty sizeable piece of who you are and it's not something that you feel is accepted in your community, I don't think that you could belong. So, like being a teacher, if that for whatever reason were looked down on or thought that it was wrong and not accepted in my faith community, I know I would feel like I don't belong.

Interviewer: Awesome, thank you. So, on the, you kind of also mentioned age group differences on two of the categories, kind of said it depends on if it's around younger people versus older people, can you tell me a little bit why that would impact your sense of belonging?

Respondent: So, I feel like some of the sense of belonging is like, kind of knowing the others appreciate you and want you there, and they're grateful for your presence in church. So, thinking especially of that and experimenting and diverse or different ways of worship, from my experience and what I've seen the older people tend to really not want the new thing, they like the "this is the way we worship God," anything else that's new is foreign, it's probably a departure and kind of a slipping into what shouldn't be recognized as true worship. Whereas younger people, I think very much as a majority would feel like "Yes I'm heard, I appreciate what you have and are bringing to this, I like that you are making worship real and it's not just something that is like a rigid tradition, and you're actually knowing that anything in faith is, there are always different ways to express it."

Interviewer: Yeah. Awesome. So, as you think about these different factors or variables that you mention that decrease a sense of belonging, do these variables hurt the community of faith or the Christian community?

Respondent: I don't think so. Well. I don't believe so, but that's where a lot of Christian communities have different values so depending on the values of the community, I think a lot of those things that decrease the belonging would hurt that Christian community. Like if they value, kind of not having any type of drug usage, I would think that for some, I mean it doesn't tangibly

damage them but… I don't know. No, I don't think any of them do damage it. It's kind of like you say "No, my pride is wounded but nothing else."

Interviewer: Do these factors harm the individual of faith?

Respondent: I mean, no, unless someone they happen to go home with, on the one case, takes advantage of them in some way or another. There's just, when you have that then you are more open to, if you're going with people you don't know, there's potential, those really crazy scenarios of violence or abuse of some kind. But other than that, I don't believe so.

Interviewer: Ok, awesome. Would you like to add any additional thoughts regarding connectedness or belonging?

Respondent: Nope.

Interviewer: Nope, you said it all! I'll go ahead and stop recording then.

RESPONDENT O60

Interviewer: Awesome well thank you so much for your time I really appreciate it. This should only take about fifteen minutes hopefully. For data tracking purposes I am conversing with respondent O60. Alright, it's Angelina, right?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Awesome, thank you. So, Angelina I have three scenarios that describe people who participate in a faith community. After each scenario I will ask the following questions, one at a time. The first question is what in the scenario would increase a sense of belonging or connectedness to a faith community? And the second question will be what in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging or connectedness in a faith community? Does that make sense?

Respondent: I think it will make more sense once I hear the scenarios.

Interviewer: Alright. So, the first scenario I am going to describe two people here. I'm going to tell you a little bit about your life. These individuals are a committed couple of ten years. They do have a marriage license. They have one son. One individual is a teacher and one individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every week. They tithe 10%. They do not hold leadership positions in the church. They attend a small group every week and they show personal affection in public at church. So, the first question is based on that scenario and the information provided, what would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: The couple, what would make the couple feel more welcome in this faith community?

Interviewer: Yeah, or connected.

Respondent: Are they permitted to hold leadership positions in the church? Or are they, based on gender or orientation, not able to?

Interviewer: That's a good question. Probably, in this specific instance, there's nothing prohibiting them from that.

Respondent: Ok, and did you say if the son is in Sunday School or youth group?

Interviewer: I did not say that.

Respondent: Ok so one thing I would say is the son being involved in some kind of youth ministry, whether it's youth group or Sunday School, that would potentially give the parents a different small group, I don't know what small group they're in but it would potentially increase connectivity with other parents of children which might be something that they're lacking in a rural farm area, especially If a school is far away and the kid is having to bus or is home schooled we don't know that piece of information. Off the top of my head.

Interviewer: Alright, great, thank you. So, the second question would be what in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Mostly I'm thinking of restrictions. If they were not permitted for whatever reason to be a part of the small group. I don't, it's a committed couple of ten years with a marriage certificate?

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: So potentially if there was something in the church that would give the impression that their marriage was seen as less valid for whatever reason. Anything that would try to shut them off or place restrictions or to exclude would decrease the connectivity.

Interviewer: Great. Well, I do have a little more information about this scenario. This couple is a lesbian couple, one woman is a Christian and one woman is not a Christian. Both women are white or Caucasian and they want their son to be raised in a faith community. So, considering the additional personal information, does anything in this scenario increase a sense of belonging or connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I kind of suspected this was the direction we were going. I would say, we still don't know what the small support group is, potentially if there's any form of LGBTQIA group at the church, if there's any type of specific inclusivity for that, whether it's through programming or everyone being on the same page of still love, still valid, still a marriage, there's nothing abnormal about it. And then again with decreasing it'd be the placing restrictions, any type of alienation or ostracization.

Interviewer: Alright, awesome, thank you. Now I have a second scenario and I will ask the same two questions following this scenario. This is just one individual. This person is 34 years old, she's a female and is a dentist. She serves in the Navy Reserves. She is a classically trained piano player and lives in New York City, New York. She works in public health to provide dental care to the homeless. She tithes 10% of her dental and Navy income to the church and she is unmarried. So, the first question would be what in this scenario would increase the sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I come from such a program heavy background that I would say if there's a young adult's group, we have a 20's and 30's where I'm from, so a 20's and 30's group or a 30's and 40's group, something to make her feel that she is welcome. Leadership positions, if she is interested potentially, volunteer opportunities. She's a dentist, potentially if there was, dental clinics are more rare but even part of like a health fair if that were to come to the church reaching out, saying we'd be willing to help and give back with this.

Interviewer: You said you're program heavy from your tradition, can I ask, can you explain that a little bit?

Respondent: Sure, so I taught Sunday School for 6-ish years, I used to run the middle school youth group program, worked in high school, was the director of the Cathedral Summer Camp for five years.

Interviewer: Ok, and what Christian tradition?

Respondent: Episcopalian.

Interviewer: Awesome.

Respondent: And I currently co-run the 20's and 30's group.

Interviewer: Oh great, awesome, at [Organization Name]?

Respondent: Yeah, [Name] is the one who hooked me up with you.

Interviewer: That's great. They're awesome. So, second question, does anything in the scenario decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: There are fewer potential restrictions for this one, but there's sorta the idea of anyone just not really going out of their way to be welcoming. If you show up at a new church and nobody says hi, nobody approaches you at coffee hour, it can be pretty daunting, but it sounds like she shows up pretty regularly and is not receiving the cold shoulder from anyone.

Interviewer: Ok, awesome. I do have a little bit more information about this scenario. She is Asian-American and is adopted from Korea. She lives with her significant other. She attends two different churches about once per month each. She tithes 10% but only tithes to one of the

churches that she attends. She hops between churches so she can play piano and serve on different worship teams.

Respondent: Oh cool, okay.

Interviewer: Considering the additional personal information, does anything stand out as an increase when it comes to belonging or connectedness?

Respondent: It would depend what the music scenes at each place look like and she's serving on two different worship teams which makes her a bit of a floater, she's not committed to one or the other, but clearly has found the passion for that ministry. So no, not particularly.

Interviewer: Ok. Considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: The only thing I can think is the same thing, the church hopping going between two, the principle of less time there can in many ways equate to fewer roots being put down when you're splitting your time in two different places.

Interviewer: Ok, awesome. Alright now I have a third and final scenario. I'll ask the same two questions following this scenario. This individual is a seminary student. This person is 28 years old and is a male. He is serving as a youth pastor at his local church. He teaches Sunday School to junior and senior high students. He highlights diversity in the church by introducing various worship styles. He attends church three times per week. He leads and participates in short term mission trips. He wants to be an elder in the church, he is unmarried. So, first question, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I mean he's definitely got leadership positions, he's heavily involved with the youth which is, I mean you have to build up the youth to have any type of continuation of the church, it won't survive without the youth in it. I mean he's there three times a week, that's a lot of face time there. Which likely means that he's involved in sort of the different congregations within a congregation. If there are multiple services the church is probably larger, it has many different sort of contingents of people attending different services and he's involved with a number of them.

Interviewer: Awesome. What in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness?

Respondent: Potentially the idea of going to seminary, one day he will have to leave. He's not putting down really, really deep roots, but that would be the only thing I could think of.

Interviewer: Ok, awesome. I now have more information about this scenario. He does identify as straight. He is a Nigerian immigrant and grew up as a farmer. He lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. He dates on Hinge and Tinder and will sometimes spend the night with his dates. He will go to the club occasionally on Friday or Saturday night with his friends. He occasionally drinks and partakes in medical marijuana for anxiety. He does not tithe to any church and he does not

participate in Sabbath rest. So, the first question would be considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Do we know the makeup of this particular congregation?

Interviewer: We do not.

Respondent: Ok so potentially if there were, if there was a particularly, if there was a Nigerian community at this specific church that could be one of the ways. But that's all I'm thinking of, he's still there three times a week and leading youth group.

Interviewer: Yeah. Considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging or connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: He could potentially get some flak for not any kind of tithing or doing… So, he doesn't tithe, does he pledge in any form?

Interviewer: No.

Respondent: Potentially that. It's definitely, I think important to give financially to the institution as well. Potentially that, but that's all that I'm coming up with.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. So just really quick I kind of heard on some of the restriction side, some of the things that came out were restrictions, anything that excludes, alienation, a lack of putting down roots, I'm kind of just a little curious as to why those particular variables decrease a sense of belonging or connectedness.

Respondent: I think it would be very difficult to walk in to an institution that is supposed to help people spiritually and be told you are not enough, you are not permitted to serve in these certain ways, whether or not you want to serve in those certain ways, being told that you may not, thou shalt not, is kind of difficult to get past, at least for me, I mean there's a reason why I am Episcopalian where women are permitted to have leadership positions in the church, that is not the case with every branch of Christianity, and I don't think I could be in a branch of Christianity where I was not permitted to serve the church in a leadership role.

Interviewer: So, do you think that these factors harm the community of faith, or the individuals of faith, or some combination of both, neither…

Respondent: Definitely both. I think it harms the church to exclude people from, and I mean there's the discernment process which kind of discerns whether or not certain individuals may become or ordained priests. I think that's a good thing and we need certain processes for it, but saying well no you can't be in charge of this because you're a woman or no you can't do this because you're gay and we don't really believe in that, that's a whole other problem in and of itself, but those kinds of restrictions not based on a thoughtful process in which you've been told maybe this isn't your calling but just to be told blanket no you're a woman you may only teach

Sunday School and that is the only way you can serve the church I think harms the individual and being told you are not loved equally, which we are as God's children, and harms the church because you're fighting, well not fighting but you're serving God with one hand tied behind your back.

Interviewer: Yeah, awesome. Well do you have any additional thoughts regarding connectedness or belonging?

Respondent: I think I've gotten all of them out.

Interviewer: That's good. Well, I really appreciate your time, sorry for the delay.

Respondent: No problem.

Interviewer: I appreciate your patience, you can probably tell I'm living in mass chaos from moving yesterday, so thank you, I appreciate it, and thank you for your help and insight, it will help us increase belonging and connectedness.

Respondent: We can only hope.

Interviewer: Well, we'll find out.

RESPONDENT O61

Interviewer: So, for data tracking purposes I'm conversing with respondent O61. Alright, so I have a few scenarios for you. The following three scenarios describe three different people who participate in their faith community. After each of the scenarios I will ask the following questions, one at a time. The first question: What in the scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? And the second question will be what in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? So, do you have any questions before we jump in with the first scenario?

Respondent: Nope.

Interviewer: Awesome. So, scenario number one. I'm going to describe two different people here. These individuals are a couple and they've been committed for ten years. They're married with a marriage license. They have one son. One individual is a teacher and one individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every single week and they tithe 10%. They do not hold leadership positions in the church. They attend a small group weekly. They participate in communion weekly and they show personal affection in public at church. Based on this scenario and the factors here, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I would say helping out with the orphans, giving to the church are two big ones that I can think of off the top of my head.

Interviewer: Awesome. So, second question, what in this scenario decreases the sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community.

Respondent: I would say not being a part of the leadership in the church, not everybody is called to that, that's just something that I like, to help lead. And then maybe only having one child. I

would say that just because sometimes both of the parents might be busy with stuff and so then the child won't have anyone else at home to help with.
Interviewer: Okay, awesome. I now have more personal information about this scenario. This couple is a lesbian couple, one woman is a Christian and one woman is not a Christian. Both women are white or Caucasian and they both want their son to be raised in a Christian faith community. So, considering the additional personal information here, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Um, the fact that one of them is Christian and they would both like their child to be raised in that Christian lifestyle I think is really good.

Interviewer: Alright, awesome. And then the second question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: The fact that they are a gay couple. That's one of those topics that's very tough because it's like hate the sin but love the sinner and it can get very tricky. I feel like we as Christians don't mean to exclude people that are gay but it can just sometimes happen.
Interviewer: Alright, awesome. I'll move on to scenario two. I now have a second scenario and will ask the same two questions following this scenario. This person is 34 years old; she is a female; she is a dentist. She serves in the Navy Reserves. She is a classically trained piano player and she lives in New York City, New York. She works in public health to provide dental care to the homeless. She tithes 10% of her dental and Navy income to the church. She is also unmarried. So, first question, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: Again, helping out with the homeless and giving to the church. And then I'd also say the fact that she is single could increase some belonging because then you're able to spend more time in fellowship with others or with God but at the same time if you know a lot of married people then it could kind of feel like you're a little excluded at some times. So, I feel like the fact that she's single could go either way as far as feeling belonging but I think overall it would increase.
Interviewer: Okay, awesome. The second question, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: I think working with both the Navy and dental she can probably be pretty busy so wouldn't be able to spend as much time with others. And then just being single, if she knows a lot of other couples are the only two things I could think of.
Interviewer: Okay, Awesome. I now have more information about this scenario. She is an Asian-American and is adopted from Korea. She lives with her significant other. She attends two different churches one time per month to each church. She tithes 10% but only tithes to one of the churches that she attends. She hops between churches so she can play piano and serve on different worship teams. So, the first question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: I don't know. I think the fact that she's Asian and from Korea could maybe mean that she's a little different from everyone else so they might be looking to diversify their friend group. That's about the only thing I can think of.

Interviewer: Okay. Considering the additional personal information what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging or connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: I think living with her significant other when they aren't married, and then another big one is church hopping, you don't get that solid church community. Yeah, I think those are the two big ones.
Interviewer: Okay, awesome. Now I have a third and final scenario and will ask the same two questions following this scenario. This person is a seminary student. This person is 28 years old and is a male. He is serving as a youth pastor at his local church. He teaches Sunday School to junior and senior high students. He highlights diversity in the church by introducing various worship styles. He attends church three times per week. He leads and participates in short term mission trips. He wants to be an elder in the church and he is unmarried. First question, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community.
Respondent: This person is very active in the church so I feel like people admire that and could go to this person for guidance or help, and then leading high school students you said, I think that could also be a great sense of community too helping lead them through high school.
Interviewer: Alright, awesome. The second question would be what in this scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: Yeah the fact that this person is so busy and might not be able to spend as much time with others, and then also seeking to introduce new worship styles, some people might not like that and so could end up excluding that person.
Interviewer: Awesome. I now have more information on this scenario. He identifies as straight. He is a Nigerian immigrant and grew up as a farmer. He lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. He dates on Hinge and Tinder and will sometimes spend the night with his dates. He will occasionally go to a club on Friday or Saturday night with his friends. He occasionally drinks and partakes in medical marijuana for anxiety. He does not tithe to any church and he does not participate in Sabbath rest. So, the first question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: This person identifying as straight I think would and being in Salt Lake City I feel like it wouldn't be too hard to find other people in that big city.
Interviewer: Okay, awesome. Second question, considering the additional personal information what in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: I think occasionally spending nights with his dates, going to the clubs are two big ones.
Interviewer: Okay, awesome. So, I have a few follow up questions now that we've made it through the scenarios. So going back to some of the variables that you mentioned as being variables that decrease a sense of belonging or connectedness, feel free to correct me but I kind of heard not being in leadership, maybe only having one child or loneliness, singleness could potentially be a factor, business, introducing new styles of worship, sexuality, some of those variables. Why do those variables, out of everything we talked about, decrease a sense of belonging?
Respondent: I would say that just comes from my friend group up here at [School Name] because I've believed in God my whole life but I never truly pursued Him until college so this is like my first interaction with Christian community and fellowship and so then a lot of my friends are involved with leadership or planning out activities or stuff like that. And most everyone is straight, I know of a couple that aren't and they're not open about that for fear of

being treated differently by some of our other friends. Yeah. I think all of it just kinda stems from my interactions with my first real Christian community.
Interviewer: Can you talk about that community a little bit and why those values seem to be important or I guess those variables, sorry wrong word, why those variables might impact someone's ability to connect to this community.
Respondent: Yeah, since all of us, we all met through [Organization Name] so we're really involved with the [School Name] [Organization Name] and if you're not involved with leadership then it's not as likely we'll be able to spend time together because we all have pretty busy weeks so I think that's a big thing with the leadership. What were some of the other variables?
Interviewer: Sure. I think like introducing new styles of worship, business, singleness, loneliness, and then sexuality were kind of some of the things I heard.
Respondent: I think a lot us, we all have our own churches that we like to go to and the big thing we decide on which church to go to is if we like the pastor and then if we like the worship, so if the worship is constantly being changed then I feel like it would be kinda hard to decide whether we want to go to that church or not. So, I think, yeah just kinda tying back to that community. And then busyness where we're all kind of busy throughout the week and if we don't have the same stuff going on then we might not be able to spend as much time together and on top of that in the summer all of us going home and not being able to see each other, spend time together, it can kinda get a little lonely so still wanting to have that community while apart.
Interviewer: Going back to the introducing different styles of worship and the type of church you're choosing to go to, why, I guess my first question would be, Why do we choose to go to a church that, using your words, that we like to go to versus going to a church that we might not like as much.
Respondent: Yeah I think if you don't like to go to the church then it's more likely you won't attend and if you're not attending then you can't hear the messages and worship God in that time and it can kind of deter you and push you away from God a little bit whereas if you do like to go to that church then it's more likely that you'll want to attend.
Interviewer: How do we know; how do you measure liking a church? What are the variables you consider?
Respondent: Yeah, um, I think the pastor's sermon is definitely a big one. If it's super easy to follow, really easy to understand, has several scripture references and then also if they have a main point they're trying to drive home are the big things for me. With the worship, as long as I'm able to connect with God through that then, yeah. So, worship isn't as important to me, it's still a little important but.
Interviewer: Yeah so if we were at the church that you like to go to and they changed the sermon style or they changed the worship, why would that change impact your sense of connection or belonging at church?
Respondent: Um, I guess it wouldn't really other than if I didn't like the sermon or new worship style then I might stop coming and then no longer connect, no longer see that community.
Interviewer: Going back to the scenario one with the lesbian couple, you mentioned that sometimes Christians can unintentionally exclude members of the LGBT or gay community, what does that look like and how does that effect or impact their ability to connect if they want?
Respondent: Are you talking about the people of the gay community?
Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: If they're constantly being excluded from stuff or if they think they're being thought of differently, they might not want to hang out with those people anymore. So then instead of feeling God's love it can kind of push them away.
Interviewer: So, the desire to be with people, or with people that you like, is the factor that you're getting at? Is that what I'm hearing?
Respondent: Kind of. I guess. If you feel like you're being judged by that faith-based community then you won't want to hang out with them anymore.
Interviewer: Awesome. So, do these factors hurt the community of faith?
Respondent: Sometimes yeah. Like the people with the gay community for example, they're in need of God's love as much as any other group and if we are intentionally excluding them then they don't feel that love and so that can end up kind of driving people away from God.
Interviewer: How does that impact the church itself.
Respondent: So instead of the church growing they could end up dwindling and losing believers and members if people are constantly trying to be exclusive or hateful to others.
Interviewer: Do these factors hurt the individual at all?
Respondent: Like the individual in faith?
Interviewer: Yeah, so like in scenario three the barriers to the seminary student, would that hurt him as an individual of faith?
Respondent: If he is truly following God then I feel like he would be able to discern whether or not he is excluding people and if he realizes that he has been, then I think that would hurt him a little bit by realizing that he hasn't been showing God's love to other people.
Interviewer: Now if he felt like he didn't belong in the church, would that hurt him?
Respondent: Yeah because then he wouldn't have that faith-based community that he's spending so much time with and can feel excluded in that, and would maybe want to leave that church and go to a different church, a different community.
Interviewer: Yeah, absolutely. So, I heard loneliness a few times come up. How does loneliness affect your ability to connect or belong to the rest of the faith community?
Respondent: Yeah so I mentioned being home this summer, the only way to really stay in contact with other people was over the phone and if you weren't on top of that saying we'll call at this time then you could feel really lonely and distanced from them and it's just because we'd be in different spots and weren't pursuing to commune with each other.
Interviewer: Does that feeling of loneliness impact your desire to be connected?
Respondent: I think it more just heightens that desire to be connected.
Interviewer: Okay. Do you, or would you like to add any additional thoughts regarding connectedness or belonging?
Respondent: Other than compared to high school before when I was, compared to now when I truly am following God, I feel a lot more connected with the other members of my faith-based community. I feel like I can be a lot more vulnerable and intentional with them and I don't have to worry about feeling excluded or like made fun of for believing in God.
Interviewer: So how would you describe truly following God? If that's the factor that's helping you feel more connected, how would you describe that, following God?
Respondent: Yeah, I would say for me spending daily time in the word, daily time in prayer, and taking some of the head knowledge that I had before and transforming it into heart knowledge and really internalizing everything and being able to feel God's presence in my daily life. And just continually seeking to pursue him.
Interviewer: How do you feel or experience God's presence?

Respondent: I think my big ones, I guess I have three. In worship, in quiet times, and through meeting with other people, and just kind of feeling God speaking to me through those times and knowing that he's there and that he loves me.
Interviewer: What are you doing with other people, or what experiences are happening that make you feel like God's there when you're meeting with other people?
Respondent: Yeah I think when we are being super intentional like talking about our days or our weeks or going through a book or a book in the Bible, being super intentional and also in our, if we all met up to study and somebody just has an offhand comment it happens to hit me very hard, but mostly whenever we're being very intentional with our time.
Interviewer: Awesome. The feeling from high school to now, when in high school you didn't feel very connected, now you do feel very connected, can you identify anything else that might have changed, either a barrier that was removed or something that was added that helped you feel more connected?
Respondent: I think definitely learning what it looks like to spend daily time with God through prayer and quiet times and worship and just learning how to be better connected with God because in high school I definitely didn't know that so I definitely wasn't as connected with God.
Interviewer: Alright, awesome, do you have any other thoughts today?
Respondent: I don't think so.
Interviewer: Cool.

RESPONDENT O62

Interviewer: So, for data tracking purposes I'm conversing with respondent O62. Alright Matthew I have three scenarios today. I'm going to describe different people who participate in their faith community. After each scenario I will ask the following questions, one at a time. The first question: What in the scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? And the second question: what in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? Do you have any questions before we start?
Respondent: I don't think so.
Interviewer: Sweet, if you have any questions just stop me and let me now, super easy, there's no right or wrong answer, not like a finance test. So, scenario one I'm going to describe two people here. These individuals are a committed couple of ten years. They are married with a marriage license. They have one son. One individual is a teacher and one individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every single week. They tithe 10% and do not hold leadership positions in the church. They attend a small group weekly. They participate in communion weekly and they show personal affection in public at church. The first question, based on those facts, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: For these two people, is that kind of what you're saying?
Interviewer: Yeah just based off this situation, factors of what we know about them, what would increase their sense of belonging and connectedness out of that list.
Respondent: Um I think the fact that they're doing a small group bible study each week is definitely going to increase that, their connectivity. I guess that's a big one for me, small group bible study kind of stuff. And then the fact that they're volunteering and helping out in the orphanage too, that's a big one.
Interviewer: Awesome. Second question, what in this scenario decreases the sense of belonging and connectedness to the faith community.

Respondent: Trying to think. Can you go over some of the stuff again?
Interviewer: Yeah, absolutely. These individuals are a committed couple of ten years. They are married and do have a marriage license. They have one son. One individual is a teacher and one individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every week. They tithe 10%. They do not hold leadership positions in the church. They attend a small group weekly. They participate in communion weekly. They show personal affection in public at church. So, the second question, what in this scenario decreases the sense of belonging or connectedness to the faith community.
Respondent: I don't think there's anything that sticks out to me that would decrease it. I think something else that adds to the first question at least for me is the fact that when at church they show personal affection and say hi to people and stuff, is that what it means?
Interviewer: Yep.
Respondent: Yeah I think that's one for me.
Interviewer: Okay, awesome. I now have more personal information about this scenario. This couple is a lesbian couple, one woman is a Christian and one woman is not a Christian. Both women are white or Caucasian and they both want their son to be raised in a Christian faith community. So, first questions, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: I think the fact that they're like seeking that community increases it for me. Yeah that they want their child to be raised in a Christian home and stuff.
Interviewer: Okay, awesome. So, second question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: I think one part of it that might just make it tough is the fact that one of them is a Christian and one of them is not, because I think that, like Paul talks about that in the Bible and stuff. Just like, it makes it tougher for the one that is a Christian to encourage the other person that isn't a Christian to come and grow with them and grow closer to Christ and stuff like that. Um, let's see. Yeah, I think too, the fact that… I don't know I think it would depend a lot on their church too, like how their church reacts to how their relationship is, the fact that they're both lesbian. There's a lot of churches that want everybody but then there are churches that aren't willing to do that, and so how does that balance? I think that could certainly impact their belonging, for sure.
Interviewer: Awesome, thanks. Now I have a second scenario and will ask the same two questions following this scenario. This person is 34 years old; she is a female; she is a dentist. She serves in the Navy Reserves and is a classically trained piano player. She lives in New York City, New York. She works in public health to provide dental care to the homeless. She tithes 10% of her dental and Navy income to the church and she is unmarried. So based on these facts, the first question will be what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: I think the fact that she's serving outside of her church, she's helping out in that way for sure. That helps her belongingness. I guess that might not even be inside the faith community but just in general. But, yeah. I keep thinking of things that are more outside the faith community because my brother is in the Navy, at the Naval Academy right now, and the community you build with the stuff you have to go through in the navy and what not is pretty strong. So, I guess that would depend if she does some chapel stuff with the Navy or something like that, I could see that making her community pretty strong and her belonging stronger.

Interviewer: The second question, what in this scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: I guess this is kind of like, just, based off my experience and comparing it to the other scenarios, she's not doing a bible study or a community group. I feel like that's where you can grow a lot and grow really close friendships and relationships, so that could be something. And did you say she attends church regularly?
Interviewer: I did not.

Respondent: Okay, I think that would be one for me then too. Like she's tithing but if she isn't going to church how is she building that belonging and community within her church.
Interviewer: Awesome. I now have more information about this scenario. She is an Asian-American and is adopted from Korea. She lives with her significant other. She attends two different churches. She goes one time per month to each church. She tithes 10% but only tithes to one of the churches that she attends. She hops between churches so she can play piano and serve on different worship teams. So, the first question, considering this additional personal information, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: I think for sure the fact that she's serving in the churches that she goes to and helping out with music in those different places, that's super cool and that can build that community. I'd say that's the main one for me in that question.
Interviewer: Okay, awesome. Second question, considering the additional personal information what in this scenario decreases a sense of belonging or connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: Yeah it sounds weird because it's very much the same reason that I gave for increasing it, but I think the fact that she's jumping around could also make it so that she has less close community. Like I know when freshmen come down to [SCHOOL NAME] they want to try out the Christian ministries and stuff, but after a semester or two you kinda want to settle down and find one that really fits you because otherwise you're going to all of these places but you aren't really close to anybody there because you have to spend time with the other community. I kind of think that if she maybe just focused on one church that she worshipped at, that might help build her community stronger. Or even if she did worship at all the different churches but still regularly attended one church that would make it so that she had a stronger community.
Interviewer: Awesome. Now I have a third and final scenario and will ask the same two questions following this scenario. This person is a seminary student. This person is 28 years old and is a male. He is serving as a youth pastor at his local church. He teaches Sunday School to junior and senior high students. He highlights diversity in the church by introducing various worship styles. He attends church three times per week. He leads and participates in short term mission trips. He wants to be an elder in the church and he is unmarried. First question, based on the scenario, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community.
Respondent: I feel like this one, this guy he's doing a lot of things. Leading Sunday school and stuff for the kids on Sunday can build belonging and community, the fact that he's able to build up younger believers. And then attending church regularly, three times a week, and helping with that and seeking to grow and become more of a leader within the church, I think that can help

him build community because he's trying to be a leader so he can't just let relationships go by the wayside if that makes sense.
Interviewer: Yeah.
Respondent: I feel like there might be one other thing that I'm forgetting, but those are the ones that stuck out to me.
Interviewer: Okay, awesome. Second question, what in this scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: I don't know if there's too much that I can think of that would really decrease it. Did it say if he did a Bible study or not? I just think that one is so important.
Interviewer: It does not say.
Respondent: I think that could be a good thing for him, like he's doing with helping the younger kids but to have that friendship and community with his age, you know.
Interviewer: Cool. I now have more information about this scenario. He identifies as straight. He is a Nigerian immigrant and grew up as a farmer. He lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. He dates on Hinge and Tinder and will sometimes spend the night with his dates. He occasionally goes to a club on Friday or Saturday night with his friends. He occasionally drinks and partakes in medical marijuana for anxiety. He does not tithe to any church. He does not participate in Sabbath rest. So, the first question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: Yeah, I think the fact that he's, I guess I don't know who he's hanging out with when he goes to hang out and stuff, but like if those are people from his church I could see that as increasing his belonging and community.
Interviewer: Awesome. So same question, considering the additional personal information what in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: I guess I think that the biggest one for me, is he seeking to live out the principles that he's teaching to these younger students in church or whatever. Like going on dates and spending the night with his date or whatever, I think, and then also is he really, if he wants to be an elder is he being committed to the church? He's not really tithing or anything like that. So those are two things that are sticking out for me. It's making it tougher for him to build that community because he's not trying to live it out. So other people that might be trying to live it out see him and are like I don't know if I really want to hang out with him a lot or if I can trust him because he's going and partying it up on the weekends and sleeping with people or whatever, so I think that can definitely hurt his community, in terms of his faith community. I think the fact that he maybe works on the weekends or is drinking, I don't think those are necessarily bad things if he's keeping himself under control. Those things just kinda stick out to me I guess.
Interviewer: Cool. Okay, so going back to some of the variables that you mentioned over the three scenarios as variables that decrease a sense of belonging, some of the things I heard, and feel free to correct me, like a mixed faith relationship, sexuality depending on the church, no community group, low church attendance, community and friendship of people in the same age group, living out what is being taught, some of those barriers to belonging- out of everything we talked about why do these variables decrease a sense of belonging?
Respondent: I think those ones were just the ones that stuck out to me most, probably just because those are some of the areas that I can see in my life and in the lives of those around me is the best way to say it. When you're not regularly attending church or doing community groups, that can definitely impact your own personal faith and it can impact your community

because you aren't really hanging out with people so why would they look at you as a good friend if you're not willing to be there hanging out with them. And then yeah, I guess something that I hadn't thought a lot about till I came to college but the fact that there's so many churches that can become self-righteous and I think they impact people's community and growth without even realizing it. So, I'm just thinking in that first scenario, if that church was really biased or against the way those people were, that can really hurt their community and then they don't know where to go to find a faith community.
Interviewer: Yeah can you talk a little more about that phrase, self-righteous church? What defines a self-righteous church or a church that might harm others? I don't know if you said harm, sorry you didn't say harm. Impact others.
Respondent: I guess I just think of it as a place that people don't realize, like look at themselves as in the same place before God as other believers if that makes sense. So, like, they look at themselves as somehow holier even though the same Christ is covering all of our sins and I think those kind of churches can kind of get into a mindset of being more works based or where the things that you do are more important. I guess that's kind of what I think of when I say that.
Interviewer: Okay. So, digging into that scenario a little deeper with the lesbian couple, if the lesbian couple were at a church where they were considered less holy than some of the other people at the church, and that's church option number one. Then church option number two does not have that situation, why does it matter which church they go to and why does that have an impact on their sense of belonging?
Respondent: I just think they would feel somewhat outcast at the other church because if that church isn't accepting of them then they aren't going to go there and be able to talk to people and hang out with them in the same way because they know what they're thinking even if they don't say it. Or maybe even people do say it. And if there's the second option of the church then they're going to be more accepting and loving and realize we're all seeking to grow more Christ-like and they're not going to shut them down or hurt them for how they act, if that makes sense.
Interviewer: What does it look like for a church to be more accepting and more loving?
Respondent: I think a big thing is being intentional and intentionally seeking to encourage those that are in the church, so maybe after the service the pastor is going around and talking to people about what they thought of the sermon and maybe what they're going to be doing this week and he can pray for them, and maybe the elders doing that too. Especially maybe if they're visitors or something, following up with them, talking to them and trying to get to know them a little more. Then once they know them more, they can be like "Hey, let's do some small group Bible studies together and let's spend some time together and encourage one another."
Interviewer: Yeah, absolutely. Two things that I heard you say that really impacted you and helped you feel like you belong were that like what you've seen with your brother so maybe serving and outside things or maybe serving in the community and then small groups. Why do those things impact your ability or your sense of belonging in a positive manner?
Respondent: So actually, we're reading this book right now, it's for our leadership team and it's called "Bells" I believe, or something like that. And he talks about how blessing people can encourage them and it can also, like I think if you're serving at the soup kitchen or something with your fellow believers, like that can build community because you're helping people but that can also bless those people that need your help and show them that we want you to be, we just want to love you and encourage you and I think that's a good thing. And then for community groups, I guess I've just seen how they've impacted my life and the lives of those around me because I think in a big church setting it's harder to have more of a personal relationship and

know everyone really well because a lot of churches are bigger so you can't just know everybody. But if you have a small community group and they know the things you're going through and that you're struggling with, they can encourage you in that and strengthen your sense of belonging and stuff like that.
Interviewer: Going back to blessing people, I heard that blessing people builds community. How or why does blessing people build community?
Respondent: I think that the biggest way that it can do it is just because if I, like you if you need a ride somewhere and I give you a ride and help you out in that way then you're going to feel more encouraged hopefully and in that you're going to want to use that encouragement to fill others up as well, or at least that's the hope. And I think blessing people can help them realize the community they do have. So yeah, maybe someone's having some trouble. Even, it was just last year, but one of my friends, his car went to crap so he couldn't drive it anymore and we all kind of just gave some money to just kind of kickstart hopefully some, enough money for him to buy a car and use it. He was able to do that and that's just a little way, he didn't even, he only got the money from one guy so he didn't know that everyone had maybe kicked in but was like a little way that we were able to bless him and then he realizes that he has an awesome community here.
Interviewer: Yeah that's a good example. So, going back to those variables that decrease a sense of belonging, do these variables and factors harm the community of faith, and if so how?
Respondent: Um, I think yeah definitely some of them can. I don't know, I guess I think of, like, if you're not willing to participate in Bible study or help others out in that way, or I guess like go to church, like those things can maybe make people kind of question "Am I doing things right" or "Do these people not like us" and that can maybe harm the community a little. Yeah I don't know, that's kind of tough.
Interviewer: You're saying that from the church perspective, the church might wonder why these individuals who don't belong feel that they don't belong?
Respondent: What was the question again?
Interviewer: Do these variables harm the community of faith, and if so, how?
Respondent: So, the variables like…
Interviewer: Yeah so some of those variables like mixed faith, sexuality, lack of community group, low church attendance, lack of friendship, trust, maybe lack of congruence depending on the people that you're with, like those variables that you listed that would decrease a sense of belonging, do those hurt the church?
Respondent: I think, yeah it can in some ways because if there aren't a lot of people, or maybe there's a lot of people that come to church once in a while but there aren't a lot of people who come consistently, I think that can hurt the church and especially its growth and seeking to reach out to the community around it because the pastor might now know who they can talk to about that kind of stuff. And I guess with community groups and stuff, if people are signing up but not coming or maybe they're not signing up or coming at all, if they come once or something like that, at [SCHOOL NAME] we experience that sometimes and I think that kind of like makes you wonder "Am I doing something wrong?" or "Do we need to shift how we're doing things" or something. Those factors can definitely have some impacts on how the church grows and how strong their community is.
Interviewer: Do these factors harm the individuals of faith?
Respondent: Individuals within the church or the individuals that don't, or are not…

Interviewer: It could be both, I think the question is geared more towards the people who might not feel like they totally belong or might not have a sense of belonging or connectedness.
Respondent: I think, yeah, if they aren't doing Bible studies or if they have a mixed faith relationship that can definitely kind of hurt their faith and what they believe, just because I think, especially when it comes to like you know, that couple, if they're together a lot that can impact the Christian person's perspectives and maybe make them less strong in their faith and belief and doubt what Christ is doing and has done in their lives and things like that. And if they're not going to do community groups and stuff, I think you can get a lot out of personal quiet times but it's also good to hear other perspectives and hear what other people are saying and have people that hold you accountable as well, I think that's a big part of it in a community group.
Interviewer: Awesome. Would you like to add any additional thoughts on connectedness or belonging?
Respondent: I found here at [SCHOOL NAME] like you can grow so much by just growing a small squad of believers. I don't know if [Name] told you but he sent the link to the little book club that we have which is just a few of us dudes and we just read through books and talk about them, and all those guys in that book club and then we did a program called Noblemen last year, I know I can depend on those guys 100% and they're willing to hold me accountable and ask tough questions and I think that's really important.
Interviewer: Cool, awesome, thank you.

RESPONDENT O63

Interviewer: So, for data tracking purposes I am conversing with respondent O63. Alright, so today I have three scenarios where I will describe people who participate in their faith community. After each scenario I will ask the following questions, one at a time. The first question is what in the scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? And the second question- what in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? Does that make sense? Do you have any questions?

Respondent: Yeah I think that definitely makes sense.

Interviewer: Awesome, we'll jump right in with the first scenario. I am going to describe two different people. These individuals are a committed couple, they've been together ten years. They are married and have a marriage license. They have one son. One individual is a teacher, one individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every week. They tithe 10%. They do not hold leadership positions in the church. They attend a small group every week. They participate in communion weekly and they show personal affection in public at church. So based off that information, the first question would be what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Yeah I think one thing that sticks out right away is that they attend the Bible study. You said that they did right?

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: Okay cool, just making sure I got that right. I think that's a key element to it. Is it strictly Bible study or do they do community service?

Interviewer: It doesn't say.

Respondent: Okay gotcha. I think Bible study is a sweet way to kind of engage with a smaller community and get to know people in the church that you don't necessarily do on Sunday morning. I feel like it's almost like a part of American culture that you don't necessarily really talk to people at church unless you really know them and so it kind of opens up that avenue, if you see people at church to kind of catch up and see how has your week been since we met on Wednesday for Bible study. One to catch up and touch base that way. I think too, just the family unit that they have is also a great avenue to have all three of them involved with the church, involved with Bible study, involved with each other's lives, encouraging each other to grow closer to Christ as well. I'm trying to remember what else was in the scenario. Yeah I think probably living in a rural town, probably a smaller population so people probably know each other better, and so I don't know if that's a super big factor but I think that's probably a contributing factor, I guess a smaller community is more connected maybe.

Interviewer: Alright. So, second question, based on this information, what in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: That's a good question. Not 100% sure. I think maybe, it doesn't define any community involvement or involvement with non-Christians like it didn't explicitly mention that and I feel like that's a big part of Christian ministry and Christian community, just being inclusive and welcoming and people talking about differences between each other. And so that would probably be my one point I bring up.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. I now have more personal information about this scenario. This couple described is a lesbian couple. One woman is a Christian and one woman is not a Christian. Both women are white or Caucasian and they both want their son to be raised in a faith community. So based on the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Yeah I feel like it's tough to have one person who is a Christian and one who is not a Christian, and I don't know how you would reconcile that between the two of them but I think that kind of makes it more difficult to agree on some things. And so, I think, too, I like that they're involved with the church and want to be involved with the church, I think that's a big thing. I don't know, it's a good question.

Interviewer: Awesome. So, the second question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Potentially the disagreement between the two, whether or not Jesus is who he says he is, whether or not there is something beyond this world that we're living in probably detracts

from that sense of community and probably isn't an encouragement towards Christ and so that would be my thought train.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. Now I have a second scenario and I will ask the same two questions following this scenario. This person is 34 years old, she's a female and a dentist. She serves in the Navy Reserves and is a classically trained piano player. She lives in New York City, New York. She works in public health to provide dental care to the homeless. She tithes 10% of her dental and Navy income to the church. She is unmarried. So based off of that information, what in this scenario would increase the sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Did you say if she's involved in a Bible study at all?

Interviewer: I did not.

Respondent: Gotcha. I think that would definitely be a way to increase the connectedness with the community, just to get people to know and also engage in deeper conversation that doesn't necessarily flow inside of social after church settings. And so, I think also like with the last one, any type of discipleship or mentorship, relationship would also be good to have that one on one, kind of the deepest of the deep relationships there. Or maybe starting a Bible study with the people in the Navy Reserves and growing community there or hosting dinners and getting connected and having community events.

Interviewer: Okay. So, second question, what in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think it would decrease if she stopped going to church or something like that. I think I personally would feel a little disconnected if I didn't have the small group setting to really engage with, and so I think the lack of that is kind of detracting from the sense of community.

Interviewer: Awesome. I now have more information about this scenario. She is Asian-American and is adopted from Korea. She lives with her significant other. She attends two different churches about one time per month each. She tithes 10% but only tithes to one of the churches she attends. She hops between churches so she can play piano and serve on different worship teams. So, the first question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think one that that kind of increases it is being involved in different churches. You kind of meet different… different congregations around, you said she's in New York I think. And so, it kind of increases a broader view of the community at large and kind of helps to foster inter-church community maybe? And so, I think that is definitely a beneficiary there. I think as church groups we don't necessarily mingle a whole lot outside of church with other churches or anything like that, so I think that's definitely a benefitting factor there.

Interviewer: Awesome. So, the second question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think one thing, it's kind of like a catch-22 with the church hopping because you meet different congregations, different believers, but you also don't have that one home church to go back to, so I think that's a really vital thing to have, really being involved with one church and rolling with that, staying with that crowd to invest there.

Interviewer: Alright. So now I have a third and final scenario, I'll ask the same two questions following this scenario. So, scenario three, this person is a seminary student. This person is 28 years old and is a male. He is serving as a youth pastor at his local church. He teaches Sunday School to junior and senior high students. He highlights diversity in the church by introducing various worship styles. He attends church three times per week. He leads and participates in short term mission trips. He wants to be an elder in the church and he is unmarried. So, first question: What in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think one thing that definitely increases it is being so involved, across the board with parents and kids, probably general church members at large. As well he probably knows the senior pastor, the pastor staff, the group of elders as well, so there's that connection between the congregation as well as the church leadership, which probably creates a sense of belonging and community. I think too, going on a mission trip is a big community thing too, so I think that's another building block there.

Interviewer: Okay. And second question, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think one thing that could definitely decrease it in this scenario is it sounds like there's a lot of pouring out, it's a lot of leading like youth group leading, leading mission trips, wanting to be on the board of elders, or I don't know if board of elders is the right terminology. But a lot of leadership, a lot of pouring out, and not a lot of being poured into, so I think that can lead to being in an exhausting place, so trying to find some sort of balance for being poured into but also pouring out, I think that would help. But I think being so involved in leadership and serving can create tiredness or exhaustion.

Interviewer: Okay. I now have more information about this scenario. He does identify as straight. He is a Nigerian immigrant and grew up as a farmer. He lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. He dates on Hinge and Tinder and will sometimes spend the night with his dates. He'll go to a club on Friday or Saturday night with his friends. He occasionally drinks and partakes in medical marijuana for his anxiety. He does not tithe to any church and he does not participate in Sabbath rest. So, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Sorry can you repeat the scenario one more time?

Interviewer: Yeah. He identifies as straight. He is a Nigerian immigrant and grew up as a farmer. He lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. He dates on Hinge and Tinder and will sometimes spend the night with his dates. He'll go to the club on Friday or Saturday night with his friends. He occasionally drinks and partakes in medical marijuana for anxiety. He does not tithe to any church and he does not participate in Sabbath rest.

Respondent: Gotcha. I think one thing that can contribute to that sense of belonging and connectedness in a community is that he's from Nigeria and has a different background. That would be my thought process there. A different almost like authority to speaking to other people's lives than like someone who is Caucasian might have. And two, I think Utah is fairly big into farming, I'm not entirely sure, I don't know too much about Utah but potentially being able to minister well in that, I don't know I'm struggling with the word, with that community.

Interviewer: Awesome. So, second questions, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Yeah I think this is kind of like a unique scenario. I think that the guy kind of lives a crazy life a little bit and I think that decreases. I don't know if people would trust him a whole lot and so I think that kind of like personal decisions are with him in a way that the church might not necessarily be moving and so that creates that conflict there, kind of separates the community.

Interviewer: Okay, cool. So, I just have a couple of follow up questions since we finished the scenarios. So, a few of the variables that I heard that might be barriers to belonging or connecting to a church were maybe a lack of inclusivity, lack of congruence, if you're not in a small group, maybe hopping between churches, being too busy, maybe some conflict between your personal decisions and the church. Out of everything we talked about why are these variables in particular the ones that decrease a sense of belonging?

Respondent: So, you said it's a sense of inclusivity, the congruity (sic), what was the second one?

Interviewer: Well, those are the things I heard you say, so if I'm off feel free to correct me. So just out of everything that we talked about, the things that were mentioned, some of the like, lack of congruence, conflict between personal decisions and being too busy, not being in a small group, the lack of being included- why would those variables, out of everything we talked about, be the ones to decrease a sense of belonging?

Respondent: Yeah I think that it's tough to be, to have that sense of belonging if you don't know anybody super well. I know for me I feel very loved in the community I'm in because we all spend so much time together, we all know so much about each other, it's just like having that inclusion. That inclusion too of having people that don't agree with you is also really vital too, it kind of changes your mindset, and I think that, or the lack of that is kind of like an isolation box which I don't think is too beneficial for a community so being too busy or the lifestyle choices, small groups are probably not for everybody so that's a personal choice there. But I think that

you make time for what's important to you, so if you're going to put the Lord first you're going to really have to make time for it. Like there's an analogy I was told way back in the day that you make time for what's important to you, when was the last time you missed a meal? I don't know, a long time ago. Whereas when was the last time you missed spending a day in the word, so what's the priority of life? And it's really hard to invest in a faith community if you don't have a priority set and time set aside for that.

Interviewer: Awesome. Would you like to add any additional thoughts regarding connectedness or belonging?

Respondent: I don't know. Yeah I don't know.

Interviewer: That's alright.

RESPONDENT O64

Interviewer: For data tracking purposes I'm conversing with respondent O64. So, I have three scenarios. I'm going to describe people who participate in the Christian faith community. After each scenario I will ask two questions, one at a time. The first question: What in the scenario would increase a sense of belonging or connectedness in a faith community? And the second question: what in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connection in a faith community?

Respondent: Okay, so, and you'll repeat questions, but for my head to think of when listening, what is increasing a sense of belonging, and what is decreasing a sense of belonging.

Interviewer: Correct. Based on the information in the scenario. Cool. Any other questions?

Respondent: I don't think so.

Interviewer: Great, it's pretty easy. Well, I think so but I've done it a lot. So, scenario one I'm going to describe two different people. These individuals are a committed couple of ten years. They are married and do have a marriage license. They have one son. One individual is a teacher and one individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every week. They tithe 10%. They do not hold leadership positions in the church. They attend a small group every week. They also participate in communion weekly and they show personal affection in public at church. So based off of that information, the first question would be what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I think what stuck out of all of that first was even showing affection to one another within the context of the church community, that there's this freedom and comfortability to be able to do that. Sense of belonging, almost like this two-fold of they know they can be involved whether with life groups, small group, communion, church attendance, and not feel like they have to be on leadership or hold a leadership position within the church, like "Hey, we can belong here without having to do everything." Those are the things that stick out.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. The second question, what in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connection in a faith community?

Respondent: I've heard it from folks before that sometimes having a kid can decrease that sense of belonging, since they were part of that community prior to having a kid. The other side of the

coin with leadership or not being in leadership, maybe they aren't in leadership because they were never approached to be and if your church community isn't validating your ability to be a leader, that would make it hard to feel like "Oh yeah, potentially we belong here."
Interviewer: Awesome. I now have more personal information on this scenario. This couple is a lesbian couple. One woman is a Christian and one woman is not a Christian. Both women are white or Caucasian and they both want their son to be raised in a faith community. So, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario that would increase a sense of belonging and connection in a faith community?
Respondent: What would increase, they want their child to be a part of the community. So again, almost going against what would decrease it from the part before the more information. "Yeah we have a kid, we want them to be a part of the community." I know some relationships, if one partner is a Christian and the other isn't, sometimes the one that is a Christian will say "Hey I want us to be a part of a community, to belong to part of a community, so you might come to follow Jesus or become part of this faith community as well in a deeper way." So again, not knowing from the scenario what type of church it is, but if the church is an LGBTQ affirming community then that would increase their sense of belonging as a lesbian couple, like "Hey, we want this for our kid and we want this for ourselves, and we know we aren't going to receive hate and judgment."
Interviewer: Awesome, so second question, considering the additional personal information, what in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging or connection in the faith community?
Respondent: It could be their potential histories or experiences with church or faith communities with regards to being lesbians that could impact their trust of will this community actually be one that supports and loves and cares for us, one that invites us into deeper community and relationship in faith. Again, not knowing this church background but if this is non-affirming, that would decrease the sense of connection or ability for belonging and would even think too does that play into leadership as well. If our capabilities to lead are being nullified because of our sexual orientation, I would see that as being hard to say, "Yeah this is a place where we can belong, this is a place where our child can belong."
Interviewer: Awesome. Now I have a second scenario and will ask the same two questions following this scenario. Just one person in this scenario. This person is 34 years old and a female. She is a dentist. She serves in the Navy Reserves. She is a classically trained piano player. She lives in New York City, New York. She works in public health to provide dental care to the homeless. She tithes 10% of her dental and Navy income to the church. She is unmarried. So, first question what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connection in a faith community?
Respondent: I think her potential availability to be part of the church community that would come from being single, from not having kids, how that can also lend to being able to be involved with different groups or connecting points that maybe otherwise wouldn't be. I think indicating that she has a sense of belonging is this commitment to tithing, to giving financially to the church. Those are the things that stick out I think.
Interviewer: Okay, awesome. The second question, what in this scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?
Respondent: Potentially her singleness. Potentially not being seen as a whole person or just sheltered into "Hey here's the singles group and can't wait to set you up with someone else." I'm trying to remember the scenario, it sounds like she has a lot of other responsibilities outside of the church community between Navy Reserves and dentistry and she does community work with

dentistry as well, if I remember right, something to that effect. So, you can say connections might be stronger in these other areas and a sense of belonging that being a part of the church community may be just an additional ancillary piece.
Interviewer: Awesome. I do have more personal information about this scenario. She is an Asian-American and is adopted from Korea. She lives with her significant other. She attends two different churches about one time per month each. She tithes 10% but only tithes to one of the churches that she attends. She hops between churches so she can play piano and serve on different worship teams. So, the first question, considering this additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connection in a faith community?
Respondent: Her being able to serve and share her gift of being a classically trained pianist. Gosh that's what sticks out in that scenario. Potentially if one of those churches, one of them if she has grown up in or is able to identify with like here's other Asian-Americans or "Here's where I've been seen more," it's like "This is the consistent home church that I've been able to be a part of and affirmed." Yeah I think that's what sticks out is potential for what would be increasing connections.
Interviewer: Okay, awesome. Second question, considering the additional personal information what in this scenario would decrease a sense of connection or belonging in a faith community?
Respondent: I think bouncing between multiple congregations or church homes can make it hard to put down roots to have a larger sense of belonging and connection. At the same time, it makes me think and wonder like do the different churches serve different roles in connecting with her? Do they provide different arenas for her to serve or be known but what would stick out as a potential getting in the way or not having her belong and be connected would be saying one of these churches doesn't click all of the boxes or isn't really seeing her in her fullness. I think potentially relationships can impact that as well, whether her and her partner are from differing faith backgrounds or even just differing denominational backgrounds. If we're going to be committed to one another, maybe that's going to trump, not use the word trump, override the sense of needing to belong to one single church community.
Interviewer: Okay, awesome. Cool. Now I have a third and final scenario and will ask the same two questions following this scenario. Scenario three- this person is a seminary student. This person is 28 years old and is a male. He is serving as a youth pastor at his local church. He teaches Sunday School to junior and senior high students. He highlights diversity in the church by introducing various worship styles. He attends church three times per week. He leads and participates in short term mission trips. He wants to be an elder in the church and he is unmarried. So, first question, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community.
Respondent: He's got multiple connecting points throughout the week within the church community. He has leadership roles and the ability to, and seemingly the freedom to get to paint a picture of the more global church, more global kingdom in mind. Potentially from his desires to even seek out greater leadership in the future would say "Hey, I can see myself here." Yeah and then even the mission trips can be like "Hey this is a part of your job," but it's also a sacrifice, so thinking a willingness to sacrifice time and comfort and the normal to serve to create an experience for other people, for kids within the church to serve, that would show a sense of connection and belonging and increase that.
Interviewer: Okay, awesome. Second question- what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connection in a faith community?

Respondent: Seems very busy, seems like there's a lot asked of him and that church could be even more seen as this is a job and what I do and not a church, this is a body of which I'm part of and which… Yeah it doesn't, in this scenario it doesn't sound like there are a lot of ways that he is being poured into, but a lot of him being poured out and so that would make me wonder what type of connection is happening there. Going back to the idea of desiring to be an elder someday makes me wonder too like the flip side of saying "Hey that's a place I could see myself, it's like is he also seeing, I would love that but I also see barriers between now and getting there and so would that be a leadership position that would be welcomed to me, offered to me. And then I think too, singleness could be a part of that as well, it maybe even plays into the busyness, you're single and you can do more and you're doing that for the church and that's part of the church and that's a good thing you're connected but may not be really listening and seeing the needs and the person who he is.
Interviewer: Yeah, awesome. I now have more information about this scenario. He identifies as straight. He is a Nigerian immigrant and grew up as a farmer. He lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. He dates on Hinge and Tinder and will sometimes spend the night with his dates. He will go to a club occasionally on Friday or Saturday night with his friends. He occasionally drinks and partakes in medical marijuana for anxiety. He does not tithe to any church and he does not participate in Sabbath rest. So, the first question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connection in a faith community?
Respondent: You said he's a Nigerian immigrant?
Interviewer: Yes.
Respondent: So, just the need for community that, regardless of potentially how long he has been in the U.S., how long he has been in Utah, I think there can often be this increased sense and need like "Hey I need community and I can find that within the church." Other pieces of that make me sync to the second question of what might be indicators of not receiving community and belonging.
Interviewer: Okay, yeah.
Respondent: That, hey here's, and I think everybody needs, we exist in multiple spheres and we exist in varying communities and so it… What could be indicative of not finding belonging or connection is… Is what the community he's finding outside of the church from going to clubs and yet at the same time it's like, clubbing is not inherently wrong and clubbing does not inherently mean you're not finding community within your church. And the same thing with, like you can look and say this guy is looking and trying to find dates on Tinder why doesn't he try to find them in the church, that would be an indication, but at the same time finding a date or a partner or a connection via Tinder isn't inherently like "Yeah that's very un-Christian, that's this indicator that you aren't finding community and belonging and connection within the church." So those things I think could be signs, maybe more of a sign of not connecting or belonging to church might be around tithing, saying "Hey the finances that I do have I'm not putting back into the church I'm working at or another church home." Although at the same time I will say this, I know it can be a weird spot for people to be like "Hey, this church is paying me, and now I'm giving some of this money back to that same church as a tithe," that can feel like a weird thing too and not necessarily that there's no connection or belonging there. But I think that not tithing to any potential church can be a sign of lack of connection. And not being able to, or choosing to take a Sabbath is like who are the people within the church that would be encouraging you, that know you enough to say "Hey, you need to rest." Have enough cache, relational capital with this guy to say rest is a good thing. So even more than the Tinder and the clubs, more indicative I

think of not connecting would be around Sabbath and tithing, although I'm sure obviously there's more to it than just that too.
Interviewer: Cool. So that's the end of the scenario. I have a couple of follow up questions. Going back to some of the variables that might decrease a sense of belonging or connection, some of the things I heard might be having a kid, not being involved with leadership, a lack of trust with the church, sexual identity, bouncing between churches, busyness, desire, Sabbath, finances, those are some of the variables I heard.
Respondent: I even wonder, now that I think about it too, about the third scenario, here's a Nigerian immigrant in Utah, and I don't know the demographics of the state of Utah or Salt Lake City but I'm pretty sure it's pretty darn white and if I'm someone from a different country and I don't see people, if I can't be, if this church I'm supposed to be connected to really doesn't speak to my needs and my experience, why would I feel connected there? Sorry to interrupt you but that's something that I…
Interviewer: Yeah, so based off of some of those variables that we talked about, why do these variables over the other variables decrease a sense of belonging? Why do these cause, what is the root of why these cause that decrease?
Respondent: I think in some ways, and I wouldn't say that it's the one thread connecting all of them, but I think in a lot of them it's this idea of being known and that sense of "I'm known and this what my experience has been as an immigrant. I'm known and this is what my experience has been as a lesbian. I'm known and this is what my experience has been as a parent. I'm known and this is what my experience has been as a professional and even a veteran. And because of those experiences, these are the different needs that I have." And it's like if the pockets within the church don't seek to know me and my experiences, don't seek to know me and my needs, I think it's much harder to find a deeper connection and belonging or one that would be lasting. Maybe it gets to be for a time, but that would seem to be more service level or more temporary. And then it's like, "Hey, I'm known, my experiences, my needs, and I'm not turned away." My experiences and my needs don't disqualify me from community. And even experiences, needs, my actual gifts and talents, that knowing me also means knowing ways that I can serve. But if you're letting something else, some other part of me disqualify me, or if you don't even want to get to know ways that I can serve, it's like why would I plug in here longer? I think maybe not a thread connecting all of them but a lot of them is this idea of actually being known or being in a community in which they can be known.
Interviewer: Awesome. Do these variables harm the community of faith and if so, how?
Respondent: Do they harm the community of faith?
Interviewer: Yeah, do they cause harm to a church or to a group of believers?
Respondent: I don't think so. I would almost say the other side of it, when you aren't seeing people more fully as who they are, especially as a church community, you're missing out on seeing a greater picture of the image of Christ, so you are doing harm by, in some way there.
Interviewer: Do these variables harm the individuals of faith?
Respondent: No. And again, I think their exclusion, they're not being known, they're not being seen as image bearers, and even being encouraged to grow into the image of Christ in greater ways, that is hurting them, not being able to be within a community that would call them to that, that would encourage that, that would cultivate that in them.
Interviewer: Awesome. Is there anything else you'd like to add regarding belonging or connectedness?

Respondent: I think it's very important. But something that came up to my mind in the midst of, so much I think does fall on the church or church community in that, to create spaces of connection and belonging, to have a heart and an atmosphere and a culture of that. But I also recognize that it does end up falling on individuals as well who are coming into this, but I don't think that it starts with an individual coming in. It's like saying you've potentially been hurt before and so you're the one who has to share everything about yourself with this community who you're not necessarily sure about, you're probably causing more trauma there. Are you earning the right to listen to this person's story? The right to listen to who this person might be? But there is, there is that hurdle of trust in some ways on both sides to have to work through for belonging, for connection. It's hard, and a lot of work, and is simultaneously like super straightforward and super complex.

RESPONDENT R2

Interviewer: Sweet, so for data tracking purposes I am conversing with respondent R2. Alright, so I have three scenarios that I am going to describe to you today. The following three scenarios describe people who participate in their faith community. After each scenario I will ask the following questions, one at a time. The first question being what in the scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? And the second question, what in the scenario decreases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community? Do you have any questions before we start?

Respondent: No, I think I got it.

Interviewer: Alright, well if you do have any questions just stop me and let me know. It's pretty easy, no right or wrong answers, so that's good. Alright so for the first scenario I am going to describe two different people and some stuff about their life. So, scenario one, these individuals are a committed couple of ten years. They've been married and do have a marriage license. They have one son. One individual is a teacher and one individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every week. They tithe 10%. They do not hold leadership positions in the church. They attend a small group every week. They participate in communion weekly and they show personal affection in public at church. So, based on that information my first question would be what in the scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: The marital commitment for sure. I would say also the partaking in communion weekly and the tithing certainly, the 10%, because those acts seem to me as though they're, certainly participating in the sacrament definitely increases connection and then obedience to tithing indicates buy in to their local congregation, I think.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome, thank you. So, the second question would be what in this scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Umm, I mean, I don't think you necessarily described the perfect family but I didn't hear any details in the scenario that you described that would measurably decrease a sense of belonging or connectedness, but I'd be happy to listen to them again though.

Interviewer: Sure, yeah. These individuals are a committed couple of ten years. They've been married and do have a marriage license. They have one son. One individual is a teacher and one individual is a nurse. They live in a rural farm community in Tennessee. They use their skills to support orphans and foster kids. They attend church every week. They tithe 10%. They do not hold leadership positions in the church. They attend a small group every week. They participate in communion weekly and they show personal affection in public at church.

Respondent: Okay, I'd like to augment my increase list by adding the weekly church attendance and participation in small groups.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome.

Respondent: And as far as the decrease, I mean, I don't think it necessarily decreases a sense of belonging if you don't hold a leadership position so I'd like to keep my answer that I didn't hear anything in there that would decrease a sense of belonging.

Interviewer: Awesome, sounds good. I now have some more personal information about this scenario. This couple is a lesbian couple, one woman is a Christian and one woman is not a Christian. Both women are white or Caucasian and lastly they want their son to be raised in a faith community. So, my follow up question would be considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: I should have known a zinger like that was coming. I mean, I guess that depends on the nature of the faith community, right? If you're a mainline Episcopal, Methodist, certain branches anyway, Presbyterian certain branches anyway, this is a good fit for our church. If you're PCA, REC, Southern Baptist, nothing in the additional facts would necessarily increase the sense of belonging. Now do you mean for the congregation or for the couple?

Interviewer: It could be either.

Respondent: Well, in every particular except, in the scenario you described, in every particular except for the additional fact of being two women, it'd appear to be a somewhat model couple. My understanding of mainline denominations is they wouldn't be prohibited from holding a leadership position if they so choose, certainly in conservative denominations they would. So, anything in the additional facts that would increase, I mean, really having a desire to raise one's child in a faith community doesn't ipso facto increase a sense of belonging or connectedness, it's what you do with it. So yeah, I mean without knowing more particulars of the faith community it's hard to say whether the additional facts lead to an increase or decrease in a sense of belonging and connectedness.

Interviewer: Alright, sounds good. Alright we'll move on to scenario two. I have a second scenario and I will ask the same two questions following this scenario. So, scenario two, this person is 34 years old, she's a female and a dentist. She serves in the Navy Reserves. She is a classically trained piano player. She lives in New York City, New York. She works in public health to provide dental care to the homeless. She tithes 10% of her dental and Navy income to the church and she is unmarried. So, the first question would be what in this scenario would increase the sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Um, I mean certainly the faithful giving would. It sounds like her work for the underprivileged, from the scenario you described, I don't know if in doing if she's connected with a faith community or not or if she's just doing it by her own, so I can't say for certain whether it would lead to an increase in sense of belonging or community if it isn't itself being administered by a faith community.

Interviewer: Yeah, absolutely.

Respondent: Yeah, I mean, I think that the faithful giving was the only fact in scenario two that I heard you describe that was specifically connected to a faith community.

Interviewer: Alright, awesome. The second question, what in the scenario would decrease a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Well, she works a lot, because I have coworkers who are in Reserves and while they have family and are heavily involved at work they also have obligations to the military and so it takes away from being able to have fellowship. The fact that she's single doesn't necessarily have to decrease the sense of belonging and connectedness, it's unfortunate that for so long Evangelical churches put such a premium on marriage, you know it's an institution ordained by God but the principle of there are some who have been eunuchs from birth, like Jesus' discussion of eunuchs which I'm just going to take it that he was talking about single people and leave it alone, means that there's a seat at the table for single people but it depends on how the faith community is handling that. So right now, without knowing more, I think that her being single is neutral, her being extremely busy with two jobs, one full time, one part time, but I know a bit about Reserve duty and it really takes you away on the weekends, the busyness would probably be a decrease.

Interviewer: Alright, thank you. I now have some more personal information about this scenario. She is an Asian-American and is adopted from Korea. She lives with her significant other. She attends two different churches about once per month each. She tithes 10% but only tithes to one of the churches that she attends. The reason she hops between churches is so that she can play piano and serve on different worship teams. So, the first question, considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Tithing to the church that she does tithe to, with respect to that builds community, and I guess for the other one, playing music at church. We have a couple in our small group that does that- they belong to our church but with Coronavirus and the needs of the church one of the

members of the couple doesn't attend church at our church all the time because this person goes to play music, has a standing invitation to play music at another congregation and the way that this person lights up when this person gets the opportunity to that, indicates to me, at least for this person, that that need can't necessarily be met in the context of a single faith community. I don't see that as problematic.

Interviewer: So, you think that actually helps this individual feel more connected to their community?

Respondent: Based upon what I know of the individual in my small group I think it's entirely possible.

Interviewer: Okay, cool.

Respondent: And then with regards to anything that decreases, it depends on how open she is about her living situation or not. It's, did you say how long she's been with whoever her partner is?

Interviewer: I did not.

Respondent: Okay. I mean that, you know, the fact that her attention is divided between two churches and then her living situation at home which arguably would not be in step with God's ideal, but it's the same thing about the sudden introduction of the fact that the couple is lesbian. I don't know what, it depends on the faith community. I'm sorry to say that, but it's true.

Interviewer: Yeah. Why are you sorry to say that?

Respondent: Because God's design for marriage relationship between one man and one woman for life, as Christ loved the church, you can't forget that last clause, apparently it leaps from the pages form scripture so any relationship that's out of step from that, though it could be committed, shouldn't be held up as a paradigm, in my opinion.

Interviewer: Awesome, yeah thank you for sharing that. Very good. Now I have a third and final scenario. I'll ask the same two questions following this scenario. So, in scenario three, this person is a seminary student. This person is 28 years old and is a male. He is serving as a youth pastor at his local church. He teaches Sunday School to junior and senior high students. He highlights diversity in the church by introducing various worship styles. He attends church three times per week. He leads and participates in short term mission trips. He wants to be an elder in the church. He is unmarried. So based on that information, my first question would be what in the scenario would increase a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: Well, I have an idea of where this is going but I'll play along. I mean, certainly his service in ministry both in youth and in worship would increase. Did you mention whether he tithes or not?

Interviewer: I did not mention that.

Respondent: Okay. It's a good thing to desire to be an elder which is actually the way that Paul puts it in 1 Timothy, right? In our church we actually have elder applications, the implication being that if you desire it then it's something that you should seek out.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: I think all things being equal and without knowing what I suspect are going to be additional facts, that's good. The decrease, it sounds like he's attending church a lot. And in addition to holding down a full-time gig at seminary and the burnout potential is real. So, I think he probably, no candle can burn with both ends, so sounds like it might be prudent for this person to hold back a little bit, to tone it down for his own mental and emotional spiritual standing. Not to mention physical health if he's becoming overextended.

Interviewer: Awesome. I do have more personal information about this scenario. He identifies as straight. He is a Nigerian immigrant and grew up as a farmer. He lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. He dates on Hinge and Tinder and will sometimes spend the night with his dates. He'll occasionally go to a club on Friday or Saturday night with his friends. He occasionally drinks and partakes in medical marijuana for anxiety. He does not tithe to any church and he does not participate in Sabbath rest. So, I don't know if you thought that's where we're going, but considering the additional personal information, what in this scenario increases a sense of belonging and connectedness in a faith community?

Respondent: That is not where I thought you were going. I did not hear much that, in your additional facts that would increase a sense of belonging in a faith community. Now what you didn't reveal was the racial makeup of the church that he ministers at. I'm not making any assumptions; I don't know if it's Latter-Day Saints or versus an Evangelical church. For a Nigerian immigrant living in Salt Lake City the potential decreases are all over the place. I don't know how he got there but there aren't a lot of Africans or African-Americans in Salt Lake City let alone the state of Utah. I think we saw last season or the season before with the Utah Jazz where some knucklehead Jazz fan called out a racial slur at a NBA player, that's the type of place for, you know, I don't know if it's that way for Hispanics but obviously it's that way for black people that's the way Salt Lake City is. It's an outward example of racial tension bubbling under the surface and if he's sleeping around, you're not supposed to be engaging in unrepentant sexual sin if you're ministering the Gospel. I don't think there's any room for compromise on that one. So certainly that would decrease. He's a seminary student, I can't really fault him for not tithing, because I don't even know if all of the service is volunteer, you didn't mention if his work at the church is paid or not.

Interviewer: I did not.

Respondent: It is not, so right, he's not making any money so his lack of tithing doesn't distress me. I would consider it neutral because he doesn't have an ability to contribute. The drinking doesn't bother me, the medical marijuana for anxiety doesn't bother me, because I'm from Colorado, the same as you, so there you go.

Interviewer: Awesome. So going back to a few of the variables that you mentioned that might decrease belonging, like some of the things I heard, scheduling, identity based off the nature of the faith community, if you don't tithe, racial potentials, maybe some lifestyle stuff. So, thinking about those variables in particular, why do these variables among everything in there decrease a sense of belonging?

Respondent: I think being overextended and having personal experience with this, I think being overextended, especially if you're a minister decreases your sense of belonging because then participation at church becomes a chore, all things being equal. I don't know how gregarious this person is, I don't know if he's like one of those who, you know, thrives off the constant pouring out of himself for others. It's, I mean, in scenario three let me reiterate that he doesn't tithe, given the other circumstances you mentioned, it doesn't bother me.

Interviewer: Oh ok. Well, I was more talking about all of the scenarios in general and all of the things we talked about.

Respondent: Oh, I see.

Interviewer: Just pulling out of this scenario for a second, I'm just trying to understand why those variables that we identified through the three scenarios would decrease a sense of belonging.

Respondent: I see. Ok, so alright, with that.

Interviewer: Sorry about that.

Respondent: Yeah I'm good. Not tithing in that, given your parameter, generally speaking to me decreases a sense of belonging because I'm not, I'm not invested financially, right? I'm not, alright I'll just say it, I'm not obedient. I'm not obedient. And because I'm not obedient, because I don't have any skin in the game, it feels rather like a vending machine where I, and it's very, it seems very consumer oriented. Push a couple of buttons, pack my butt in a seat on Sunday, take the Covid safe single serving wafer and cup of juice and on my way before they sing the Doxology. Come on. How's that supposed to work?

Interviewer: In regards to maybe the piece on where I heard, and feel free to correct me, but where I heard depending on the nature of the faith community, depending on the racial makeup of the community, why is the makeup or the denomination of a faith community affect a sense of belonging or connectedness?

Respondent: Well, because the, let's take the Nigerian immigrant for an example. My guess is the culture he grew up in is very different, is worthy of praise in of itself as most cultures are, but it's very different from a strait laced, virtually white out Salt Lake City. And if I don't fit into the culture of the church, which includes not only the worship and the preaching but also small groups and periodic congregational life, it's hard to have a sense of belonging in those communities. So that's my answer on the racial component. With the LGBT component, if the

denomination you're in is not affirming of the way you live your life, I think it would be very difficult for you to feel a sense of belonging or connectedness.

Interviewer: Yeah. I was going to move on to another question so if you have another thought I'll let you go with that.

Respondent: My only thought was going to be that, you know, they don't necessarily have to fully embrace and celebrate it, I imagine, me not being a member of the LGBT community, but I think at a minimum for you to feel belonging in that faith community they have to at least affirm that you have a seat at the table for you to feel a sense of belonging and connectedness.

Interviewer: Awesome. So focusing on, kind of, you asked a little bit about the community of faith versus the individual of faith and how it would affect their belonging early on, so these factors that would limit belonging, do you think that they harm the community of faith, or do you think they harm the individual of faith, and if they harm either one, how do they cause harm?

Respondent: I think there's potential for both.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: So, sitting back on the racial tension piece, I think there's harm for both the individual and the faith community because they're not trying to better reflect what the Kingdom of Heaven is going to look like. And we know what the Kingdom of Heaven is going to look like because we're told that it's members of every tribe, nation, people, and tongue bowing down at the throne of Jesus. Red, brown, yellow, black, purple, green, all of them. With regard to tithing, it hurts the member because of the command to give which in some senses is even more onerous than the Old Testament's 10%, right? The Old Testament was 10% and you're done, the New Testament is "Hey, if you have to sell your house or give your brother all the shirts off your back, if that's what God requires of you that's what you've got to do." So sometimes that's even more onerous than the Old Testament. And I remember in Malachi, God talks about how he wants his people to test him and giving and see if he doesn't provide for them and, I'm butchering the text but it's like I'll throw open the windows of heaven. And then obviously for the community of faith as a whole, if somebody's being a strict consumer and not a participator, there's not, that's a percentage of fewer funds available for church outreach to the community, fewer funds to keep the lights on, fewer funds available for pastoral care, etcetera.

Interviewer: Awesome, thank you. Would you like to add any additional thoughts regarding connectedness or belonging?
Respondent: I think small group participation is huge, because then you have a select number of bases that you can count on, rejoice with, weep with, every week. I think that's the model that, my understanding, before Covid anyway, the largest church in the world operated on, Cho's church in South Korea. My understanding, they don't allow their small groups to grow beyond 16 people, if they do they have to split. And I think that model makes a lot of sense and really tries to throw down a level of connectedness that's built into the DNA of the church. I think we see the same scenario in politics, right? All the big flashy people are on the national level but where work gets done I feel like it's on the local level, on the precinct level.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: That's all I've got.

Interviewer: Awesome, sounds good, that was my last question.

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Walter first attended the University of Wyoming, graduating with a bachelor's degree in physics, a minor in aerospace, started his first company and was commissioned as an Air Force officer. Captain Wilson's assignments include Osan Air Base, Buckley Air Force Base, Al Dhafra Air Base and FE Warren Air Force Base. During this time, he was responsible for cyber warfare operations, information technology and communications support.

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